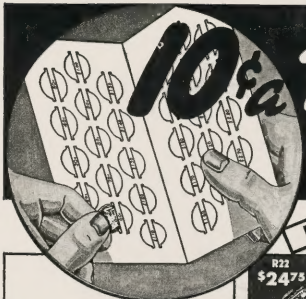
15¢
Adventure
POPULAR PUBLICATIONS
OCT.
W. C. TUTTLE
H. BEDFORD-JONES
LESLIE T. WHITE
THEY CAN BE LICKED!
GEORGES SURDEZ
PROVES IT IN THIS SMASHING STORY OF HOW THE LEGION BLASTED THE NAZIS OUT OF NARVIK



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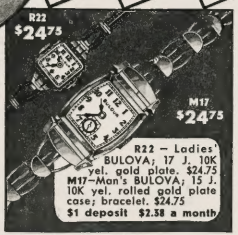

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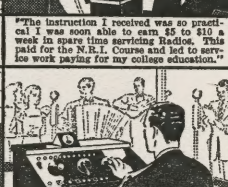

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Over 800 broadcasting stations in the U. S. employ thousands of Radio Technicians with average pay among the country's best paid industries. Repairing, servicing, selling home and auto Radio receivers (there are over 50,000,000 in use) gives good jobs to thousands. Many other Radio Technicians take advantage of the opportunities to have their own service or retail Radio business. Think of the many good pay jobs in connection with Aviation, Commercial, Police Radio and Public Address Systems. N. R. I. gives you the required knowledge of Radio for those jobs. N. R. I. trains you to be ready when Television opens new jobs. Yes, Radio Technicians make good money because they use their heads as well as their hands. They must be trained. Many are getting special ratings in the Army and Navy; extra rank and pay.

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Dept. 1KS9, National Radio Institute
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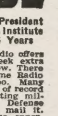
Extra Pay In Army, Navy, Too



Every man likely to go into military service, every soldier, sailor, marine, should mail the Coupon Now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duty at pay up to 6 times private's or seaman's base pay. Also prepares for good Radio jobs after service ends. IT'S SMART TO TRAIN FOR RADIO NOW!

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NOVEMBER ISSUE ON SALE OCTOBER 10TH

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 105, No. 6 for October, 1941 Best of New Stories

They *Can* Be Licked! (a novelette) . . . . . GEORGES SURDEZ 10
Beneath a hail of bombs from Northern skies the men of little hope and vast courage march to retake Narvik and blast forever the myth of Nazi invincibility. The Foreign Legion in Norway weaves a red flag of glory into the drab cloth of defeat.

The Periods of Chesty Jones . . . . . W. C. TUTTLE 57
"Well, Bill, the day of the big game Smoke Tree verses Paradise Flats the feelings was intents. For instants 1 of the fans ast me did shooting an umpire come under the hedding of murder. I said I did not follow the game that close. Bill, the joke was on him. He was evidentally unawear the umps were none other than I and Chesty."

Sermon in Stones . . . . . FRED GIPSON 68
Pulque Jesús, the sheepherder, loved his flock. The other thing he loved was *pulque*—that soul-enriching but treacherous brew of the maguey plant. But if *pulque* caused his downfall, it was the little black lamb that was responsible for his redemption.

Obsolete Equipment . . . . . HOFFMAN BIRNEY 74
Nothing had happened on Alacran since the sinking of the *Loire* in 1867 so it seemed the ideal spot to send a piece of outworn mechanism such as Bart Sully was. But the "old man" had no sooner landed than the little Caribbean islet came alive again, and when he sailed away it was with new blood in his veins and the prospect of a Navy Cross on his chest.

Wagons Away! (3rd part of 4) . . . . . H. BEDFORD-JONES 84
In company with One-Eye Potts and the hard-shell trader, Griscom, young Morgan Wright treks his way westward to meet the stern test of a lawless frontier country.

The Ninety and Nine (a fact story) . . . . . LESLIE T. WHITE 106
A mere handful of the Stone Age *Alacalufs* survive in the same primitive state they were in when Caesar's Roman legions found the Britons throwing rocks at each other 2,000 years ago. If you hurry you'll find them in their canoes paddling about Eden not far from the Isle of the Mother of God.

The Camp-fire . . . . . Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 112
Ask Adventure . . . . . Information you can't get elsewhere 118
The Trail Ahead . . . . . News of next month's issue 123
Lost Trails . . . . . Where old paths cross 6

Cover by Albin Henning
Headings by Hamilton Greene, Paul Reinman and I. B. Hazelton
Kenneth S. White, Editor

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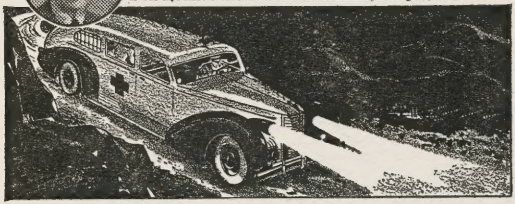
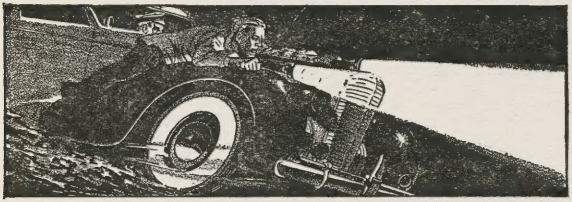
"WE RACED DEATH DOWN A MOUNTAIN SIDE!"

A true experience of male nurse GROVER C. BIRCHFIELD, Los Angeles, Calif.



"WE WERE RUSHING A CARDIAC CASE by ambulance to the hospital one dark night," writes Mr. Birchfield. "We were two thousand feet up on a winding mountain road and six miles from our goal, when all lights blew out.

"THE PATIENT WAS AT DEATH'S DOOR. I gave him a shot of adrenalin, but I knew with horrible certainty that unless he reached the hospital quickly he could not live. Yet we dared not move without lights.



"THEN, I REMEMBERED OUR FLASHLIGHTS! Lying on a front fender, I played their bright beams on the road while the car careened down the mountain. Thanks to dependable 'Eveready' *fresh* DATED batteries, we won our race against death.

(Signed) grover C. Birchfield"

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Unit of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to Lost Trails will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

My brother, William Ray Harvey, 52 years old. Was a private in Battery E, 348th Field Artillery, 91st Division, A.E.F. Reported dead in France in 1918. Was supposed to have been seen alive at Mountain View, Wyoming, March, 1940. Also, want information of William Harvey. Private in Co. G., 314th Infantry, 78th Division, A.E.F., 1918. Any information about these men will be greatly appreciated by George E. Harvey, 304—9th Avenue North, Nampa, Idaho.

John E. Vittitoe, last heard from around Pactola and Rapid City, S. Dak. If you see this, John, write me. Any information will be appreciated by C. R. Boone, R. 4, Box 135, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

I am trying to find my brother, John De Gutis. Have not heard from him for fifteen years. He was seen by friends in New York. He is now in his thirties, and might be known by a different name. Any information about him would be appreciated by M. Mutroske, 806 Albert St., Dickson City, Pa.

My aunt, whose maiden name was Anna Czupak, was born in Leluchov, Galicia, approximately 72 years ago, and had emigrated to the United States at the age of sixteen. She lived in or around Philadelphia and later in or around Reading, Pa. She had married twice but I do not know the name of either of her husbands. Any information about her would be appreciated by Michael Kolcun, 757 Ogden St., Bridgeport, Conn.

My son, Floyd White, went west in 1929. Received one letter from him. He would be 33 years old now. Sometimes went by the name of Larry. I would be overjoyed to hear from or of him. Mrs. Anna White, 806—8 Ave. S.E., Rochester, Minn.

Joseph (Jose) and Rose (Rosario) Ivorra, both Spanish, last heard of twenty years ago at Hetzel, West Virginia. Previously they lived in Philadelphia and Verona, Pa. They have several children. Any information about them will be appreciated by their niece, Mary Barcelo, 2308 So. Chadwick St., Phila., Pa.

Milton Frisby or Frisbee, age 29, born Dock Elijah Ledet, adopted by family named Frisby or Frisbee in Oakland, Cal. in 1914. Also Delores E. Ledet, age 31, thought to have been taken from Oakland to Lafayette, La. same year. Any information as to their whereabouts will be appreciated by their half-brother, H. S. Beall, 3004 St. Mihiel Ave., Norfolk, Va.

Information wanted about Caleb Hughes, age 47, World War veteran. He left home in Texas in 1921 and wrote brother in 1925 from some town in N.Y. and from Chester, Pa. According to War Department, he had been in Wilmington, Del. during 1929-30. He only went to fourth grade in school and had always worked on farm or ranch or done common labor. His mother is now deceased. Please communicate with Robert E. Mahaffey, Box 684, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Verl Erway, age 54, short and stocky, gray eyes, gray hair dyed brown, weight 164. Left Palm Beach, Fla., April 16, 1941, last heard of at Hopkinsville, Ky., April 18. Had planned to go to New York State near Elmira, and to Philadelphia by May 1st, by auto with unknown companions whom he picked up at Orlando, Fla. Any information about him will be appreciated by L. M. Dohner, 101 W. Hampton, Chestnut Hill, Phila., Pa.

I am very anxious to hear from my brother's son, Curtis Goodman, last heard from at Colinga, Cal. Also, my brother's grandson, Jack Graham, last heard about in Nowlin, S. Dakota; said he was on his way West to find his uncle, Curtis Goodman. Mrs. Louisa G. Marks, 817 Pleasant St., Des Moines, Ia.

Emory C. "Tex" Simmons, joined the U.S. Marines in October, 1929, spent one year on Parris Island and then transferred to Shanghai with the Fourth Marines, stationed with the Fourth Marines Band. Left Shanghai in 1933 to get paid off and went back to Texas. We were pals for four years but I got paid off in Shanghai and stayed there until just recently. Want to hear from Tex. Frank Burton, 207 N. Hobart Blvd., L. A., Calif.

(Continued on page 8)

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FAMOUS IVER JOHNSON 22 CAL. RIFLE

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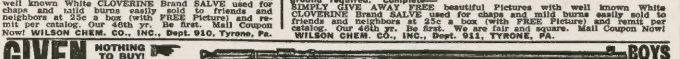

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Choice of Cash Commission

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Send No Money

Send Name and Address

Choice of Cash Commission

Bikes for boys, girls. Fully equipped. Great!

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NAME .....

RD or BOX No..... ST.....

TOWN..... STATE.....

Print Your Last Name Only in Spaces Below!

WRITE, or PASTE COUPON ON A POSTAL

(Continued from page 6)

I would like to locate Walter P. Gallmeir, who was formerly a Corporal at Station Hospital, Fort Clayton, Panama Canal Zone, and since then, I have reason to believe, has been working for the Veterans Hospital somewhere in New York State. Any word as to his present whereabouts would be appreciated. Anthony P. Narkin, Headquarters Detachment, 57th Medical Battalion (Corps), Fort Ord, Cal.

My mother, born Mary Herrin in Island Pond, Me., married my father, William Foster, and they lived for several years in Bangor. I was the youngest of six children. When I was about two years old, my father, who was freight conductor for the M.C.R.R., was accidentally killed. That was about 1887. Soon after, my mother married Charles Leonard, a ship's steward, and went to Mass. I am now 56, and have tried for many years to locate their possible children. If any are living, or if any reader can give me any information about them, please write James Garfield Foster, c-o The Billboard Pub. Co., Cincinnati, O.

Any information leading to the whereabouts of Hank Felsen will be appreciated. When last heard from he was working as an artist on a W.P.A. project in Des Moines, Ia. He is probably living in New York City, as this is his home town. Anyone knowing him or his whereabouts, please write. P. F. C. Stan Rutherford, 79th Pursuit Squadron, Hamilton Field, Cal.

Nat Williams, (generally known as 'Old Kentuck' while in the service), P. O. Box #276, Veterans Home, Napa Co., Calif., would like to hear from John W. Williams, (called 'The Psalm Singer' by his intimates), and Harry C. Morris, (a railroad man), both of whom served in Co. "H" of the 50th Iowa Vol. Infantry in 1898. Also Charles A. Moore, and Sgt. Joseph C. (Dago) Watkins, both of whom served in Co. "I" of the same regiment at the same time.

Cpl. Vernts or Verntz, Co. E, 1st. U. S. Engnrs., wounded in the battle of Ste. Mihiel. I have a photo taken of you at the time. You may have it if you wish. . . . During the last unpleasantness I was a 1st Lieut. of Inf. attached to the 1st. U. S. Engnrs. and in my official capacity carried and used a small camera. During the battle of Ste. Mihiel, in the neighborhood of Mont Sec, I think, I took a picture of a wounded American soldier surrounded by German prisoners. The kodak being of the "autographic" type, I noted on the film "Cpl. Vernts (z)". In clearing out an old trunk recently, I came across a print of the above and vaguely remember that at the time I took the photo I promised the wounded man a copy of the picture, if it turned out well. In the excitement of battle, and afterward I forgot all about sending him a print. Apparently, he was a member of Co. E. 1st. Engrs. or he might have been of some infantry outfit. H. S. Bonney, 1537 Euterpe St., New Orleans, La.

I would like to locate my father whose name, I believe, is Jack Allen, age about sixty. He worked in the sugar mills in Philadelphia about 25 years ago, for a man named Walter Norman McConkey. My mother, Annie Mary Procter, was born in Ireland. A man named Joe Maxwell, who lived with my parents, and my mother ran away together and took me with them. My mother and I went by the name of Maxwell. I was the youngest of five children. I believe I have two brothers and two sisters, whom I do not know. Anyone who knows them or my father, please communicate with Mrs. Bessie E. Camomile, c/o Elevator, National Bank Bldg., Lima, Ohio.

Henry Gould, last heard of at Ruthven, Iowa, in the fall of 1908. Any information as to his whereabouts would be appreciated by his son, of whose existence he is not aware. Dan F. Townsend, 705 S. Sloan, Compton, Cal.

Information wanted about: former nurse, Anna Kincaid, attached to Greenhut's Veterans Hospital, New York, April, May, 1919, last known address Washington, D. C.; [illegible] Detroit, Wis.; former 1st Lt. H. S. Davidowitz, Acting Chaplain, 312th Infantry, 78 Division, Camp Dix, and A.E.F., last known address given in Atlantic City. [illegible] of Company [illegible], 312th Infantry, now residing in all 48 States of the Union, and Territories, interested in forming Last Man Group, reply to Robert L. Allan, 565 West 169 Street, New York, N. Y.

Lost Trails *July 1, 1941*
Adventure Magazine
205 East 42nd Street
New York City.

A friend of my brother's recently called my attention to the fact that information is wanted by one of your readers of the whereabouts of former Chaplain Harry S. Davidowitz.

He is now living in Tel Aviv, Palestine. I am sure that a letter addressed to him there will reach him.

(Mrs.) Lillian B. Winer

Now—if the rest of the 312th are as easy to locate as the chaplain was. . . . *(Ed.)*

IS YOUR Rupture GETTING Worse?

It is terrible to feel that your rupture is constantly getting worse, taking the joy out of life, even making you feel **despondent**—without your seeming to be able to DO anything about it! And yet, it's so needless! We have information for you that has brought deliverance and joy to thousands of men, women and children, as PROVED by their letters of gratitude—now on file in our office.

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A STORY OF THE LEGION

Zantapar leaped on the gunner, landing in the middle of his back with both feet.

By GEORGES SURDEZ

A METALLIC muttering swelled in the Norwegian sky, the remote drone of Nazi bombers soaring high somewhere in the immensity of tender blues and pale greens. The machines were not yet visible but the pounding of the anti-aircraft guns on the British ships cruising in Herjangs Fjord suddenly went into action, in furious, spasmodic outbursts.

Somewhere in the reeking, gutted village of Bjerkvik, a French bugler sounded the call "attention." And the siren on one of the destroyers trumpeted, arousing the echoes.

"They're heading this way!"

Lieutenant Debourg lifted the whistle to his lips, blew once to attract attention, waved his hand. The Legionnaires of his section made for the narrow trench dug a hundred yards from the storage dumps they were guarding. The tall officer followed along behind them at a walk.

He could have known the past services of any one of his men by his behavior before an air raid. The Spaniards, who had known such peril for years, trotted slowly, looking up at the sky. Those whom he termed "the Africans," the pre-war, professional soldiers from Algeria and Morocco, imitated this calm, but showed a definite haste. The new men, those enlisted for duration, galloped as fast as they could, leaped in first, huddled at the angles, seeking the impossible: absolute safety.

Most of the Spaniards paused for a last glance upward, to compute the direction of the planes, their speed. The machines were in plain sight now, over the mountains, approaching with terrifying rapidity, black crosses growing large as they slid across the soft pastel hues, wings edged with bright light from the slanting sun, ominous, formidable —death on the wing.

"Big ones, this time, Lieutenant," Legionnaire Zantapar stated. He was a rather short man with broad shoulders and a swarthy, intelligent face, said to have been an officer in the Republican Army. "Not after us, you know. They carry two hundred and fifty pounds bombs—must be for the port."

"Hop in and shut up," Debourg grinned. "The ninety pounders are bad enough."

"You said it, Lieutenant."

Debourg slid into the trench in his turn, remained standing a moment, to look around. Through the wrecks of the little cottages scattered on the slope, he could see a glimpse of calm blue water, the surface of the fjord. Southward stretched the shore of the Ojord Peninsula, and somewhere in the shimmering mist beyond was Narvik, terminal of the Lapp Railway, northernmost station in the world, which was now held by the Nazis.

DESPITE the danger, he was struck afresh by the sublime beauty of the panorama, and by its resemblance to certain sections of his native land. The Alpine *Chasseurs* and even the Swiss in the Legion granted that this country had scenic value. Debourg was reminded of the Zugspitz looming above the placid Sebensee, in the Tyrol, of certain parts of Carinthia, near to Mittstatt am See.

The lofty mountains clad with snow, the stretches of water reflecting the sky like silvery mirrors, made the drone of the murderous planes, the crashing of artillery, the prospect of death and mutilation, seem particularly barbarous and unreal.

Debourg had seen this amazement plain in the faces of the local people. They had been living far from the rest of the world, leading organized lives of work and simple pleasures. Then, suddenly, the European War had been dumped into their front-yards. And that on the very heels of the cod fishing months, with the good weather coming. For if the crests were mantled with snow, if snow remained everywhere on the lower land in deep drifts here and there, nevertheless, spring had come to the Northland and the sun shone at midnight.

But in the murk preceding spring had come darkened ships crowded with soldiers, formidably armed units of Nazis. In one night of surprise and assassination, the Germans had sunk two coastal battleships of the Norwegian Navy, *Eidsvold* and *Norge*. Troops had landed to occupy the port of Narvik, more troops had sped northward, to take the village of Bjerkvik and the military camp at Elvegaard. Very soon after, the British Fleet had struck, smashing the German vessels. The mighty ordnance of the *Warspite* had thundered over Ofoten Fjord.

Then had come troop transports crowded with the soldiers of the Allies, French troops, Foreign Legion, Polish regiments, and all these foreigners in assorted uniforms, with their babel of languages and dialects, had started to fight, to kill, sucking in Norwegian units in a sort of mad, incoherent whirl of

terrifying noise and smoke and death.

The Legion battalions had taken Bjerkvik by frontal attack, landed from cruisers in small boats, fighting fiercely, while Poles, French and Norwegians coming overland from Bogen had circled north and squeezed out the Nazis. The invaders had fought well, up to their standards, but the Legion had scored a victory in the first encounter. But Bjerkvik was only a stepping-stone, merely a base from which to attack Narvik. It was assumed that the Germans had seized the port to safeguard the iron ore from the Swedish mines, a few miles away, over the border. It was up to the Legion, and to the other troops of the expedition, to frustrate this aim.

Debourg had confidence that the Legion would do the job, or die. But, as a professional soldier, he was furious at the way things had been handled. The Allied troops were almost without aviation, and practically helpless during raids. The French command thought it had done magnificently to issue warm clothing for the Northern Campaign. It had flung battalions of infantry, meagerly backed by a few batteries of artillery, on a distant shore, just as if aviation had been an unknown weapon, a surprise weapon!

Warm clothing! On the hills, the cold remained bitter, but the weather below was growing warm. The woolen great-coats, the goatskin jackets already proved uncomfortable at times. Debourg saw sweat dripping down the faces of his men, under the brims of the steel helmets. Yes, they were hot. Then he understood that some of the perspiration was oozing fear.

They were afraid.

All men who have faced danger have felt fear. Courage is not the absence of fear, it is the control of fear. These men had courage, but they were coping with a fear different from the normal fears of combat. With unreasoning, clammy terror. A bomb from the air could not kill a man deader than could a rifle or machine gun bullet, could not shatter him more horribly than a shell. Yet these same men who had faced the elite of the German Army, who had disregarded bullets and grenades, fire and shells, in the recent combat, now felt their bones soften, their sinews melt, under the threat of the bombers.

Those sinister machines gliding across the splendor of the sky, flying over a small village already destroyed by naval guns and land cannon, scarred and mangled by preceding raids, gave those crouching below a frightful sensation of nakedness, of absolute humiliating helplessness.

Debourg shared this fear himself. And he, a professional soldier trained to risk his life simply, without hatred, was shaking with hate. For he identified once again a familiar system. The Nazis based their successes on terror and helplessness of their victims. Confront human beings with something frightening, against which they cannot react. In peace time, overwhelm the individuals with squads of brassarded, brown-shirted fanatics, during war overwhelm nations with swarms of bombing planes.

The Nazis had cost Debourg home, country and future. He had been among the first to see the danger. He had seen the system grow from a tiny seed, when the Nazi theories were ridiculed ideas, seemingly impossible to apply in the Twentieth Century. He knew that it was now beyond the control of the very men who had started it, those who had used Hitler as a voice, a figurehead, a puppet, those who had invented his cult and manufactured his reputation. The marionette had hold of his own strings.

DEBOURG, unable to fight as an individual, unwilling to fight with the available weapons, had fled. He had started life again in a new country. But Nazism had not released him any more than any other man on the planet. The Nazis had started to move, and had shifted his fate again. He had been taken from an outpost in the Northern Sahara, across the Atlas, across Morocco, the Mediterranean, across France and to Brest. He had been drawn on again, through the Irish Sea, around the North of Scotland, across the Northern Atlantic, to be dumped on a snowy beach in Norway. From the deck of a cruiser, he had seen the swastika flags

flying over Narvik. Now, planes bearing the same emblem of hate were speeding overhead. Submit or die.

All those about him were in the same case. There were the robust, brave Spaniards, who had been flung aside by the first surging of the Nazi tide. There were the Jewish Legionnaires, luckless chaps who had been blown like leaves before the gale for years, before they had been provided with rifles and a chance to fight. Not far away were the men of the Polish Brigades, the nomads of defeat, who had escaped somehow from the iron circle of the Nazi armies, who had streamed across Rumania, crossed the Black Sea, the Dardanelles, the Mediterranean, France, and had moved on in their endless migration, circled the British Islands, to find themselves, once again, armed with rifles and machine guns—helpless under the bombers!

And there were the anonymous Austrians, Slovaks, Italians, even Germans, who had been fighting Nazism for years, the "workers of the first hour." Those for whom ideals were greater than country, liberty more precious than blood. And everywhere, here as before, their lot had been the same. They had fought against superior numbers and superior equipment.

It should change, it would change, it must change!

"Down!"

Debourg had called the warning. His eyes had discerned a faint glitter beneath the dark machines, as if the dragons were shedding scales. In another moment, the strident ululation of the first bomb split the air, seemed to come from all sides, stabbing into the ears, piercing to the brain.

The first explosion merged with the second, the third, the earth rocked. Soon, all distinct sensations vanished, there was no sight, no sounds, just the quivering of the earth all around them. Through the crashes of the bombs, the undertone of the cannon, the crackling of a hundred machine guns, came shrill wails, moans and imprecations. It was as if the thirty-odd men crowded in the narrow hole had been fused into one mass of flesh, with one agonized brain. They groaned, they swore, they wept and sobbed, they shouted in unison. Some had fallen on their knees with their heads against the side of the trench, hands locked over the steel helmets, others lay flat on the moist bottom, faces pressed into the slime.

Men never became hardened to this. Zantapar's shoulder was pressed against the officer's arm, and his quivering could be felt. He crouched low, neck pulled in between his hunched shoulders, his black eyes staring.

Why not, Debourg thought.

Was not the sky about to cave in and fall on their backs, to flatten them into nothingness, to churn their miserable bones and quaking tissues into a ghastly dough with the damp earth? Their bowels throbbed, the shocks of the explosions had repercussions in every cell of their bodies. They were thirsty, with a thirst that had nothing in common with ordinary physical thirst. With one's chest, the heart bobbed up and down, like a ball of lead suspended from a thin elastic cord.

This lasted an eternity: three minutes.

"They've gone," a man said softly.

The first formation of bombers had passed on, heading eastward, toward the Swedish border. Debourg forced himself erect, looked over the parapet.

HOUSES were in flames, there were new fires near the port. The British cruisers were firing. The bugle repeated the warning call, from the town.

"Down!"

The second formation of bombers was almost overhead.

Debourg forced himself to remain standing, this time. He was an officer, he must shake himself free of the suffering mass. His mind took refuge in statistics. What were the chances that one of the bombs would land nearby, that one of its fragments would fly off horizontally to pass exactly in the relatively small area occupied by his head and shoulders? Not one in a thousand. And if the trench should suffer a direct hit, it would matter little whether he crouched or not.

"Goddamn ostriches!" he muttered.

The bombs fell at the port. There were tremendous geysers of soil and rocks and debris, huge jets spat up from the surface of the fjord, and a multitude of lesser splashes followed, as bomb and shell fragments rained back from the sky. Other formations of planes flew low over the water, aiming at the cruisers and destroyers.

Debourg followed the combat. Pride of profession, pride of rank, instilled into him by seven years of Legion, asserted themselves. This sheer funk, this animal quivering, was psychological. He was actually in less danger now than he had been many times before. One afternoon, in a combat against a raiding band of the desert, three of his sergeants had been knocked off by snipers. Bullets had passed all around him. He had been singled out then, death had been nearer, yet he had not weakened.

Was he a jungle savage, to be frightened more by noise than effect; was he a child, more afraid of thunder than of lightning?

He took out his cigarettes, lighted one with steady fingers.

This took control, but he felt someone might be watching him. What did it matter if he was killed here, in Norway, rather than in Morocco? He had not enlisted in the Foreign Legion with the hope of living to retire on a pension. He had been lucky, had become an officer, but he was none the less a Legionnaire. And a Legionnaire has lost the right to fear death, as he lives on borrowed time, having signed his life away.

He must expect more of himself than of his men. The Spaniards had enlisted to escape the dreariness of concentration camps, as much as to fight fascism. They had no reason to be keen to die for France.

And the war-time volunteers were not prepared for this. They were civilians in uniforms, wanted to fight for principles, but each one had the right to hope that he would be alive to see his ideals triumph. With them, fighting was not a profession; for them courage and guts were not common business requirements.

The second formation of bombers passed, then a third.

Debourg saw that his example had not been wasted. His "Africans" were standing, the fear was dwindling. He was explaining, in a calm voice, that the catastrophic din was not as lethal as expected, when a fourth alarm call came from the village. It broke off short, as the new planes had been identified as British machines.

Some of the men jeered at this late arrival. But most understood what had happened. The British land fields could not be used for long, as they were bombarded by overwhelming forces. These planes were based on an aircraft-carrier far down Ofoten Fjord and had come at the first alarm. Despite their superiority in numbers, the Germans liked to work unhampered. Superbly informed, they timed their raids with the forced absences of the Britishers.

All evil came from the same cause: the Nazis were superbly prepared for fighting in this region, the Allies had to improvise. The one branch of the service which the British had kept up through the years, the fleet, was doing admirable work.

CHAPTER II

NEWS FROM HOME

"ALL clear."

The Legionnaires hoisted themselves from the trench, reeled about for a few seconds, dazed and shaken. There was activity in the village, groups of men fought fires. The men headed for a large crater nearby, stared at the bottom of the hole. There was a human leg there, the foot neatly shod in a French issue boot. Not far away, against the enclosure of a garden, sat a young *Chasseur*. He grinned foolishly, holding his helmet, padded with a beret and first-aid bandages, over the stump of his right arm.

Two of the Legionnaires, green men, started to pick him up. The lieutenant waved them away. He placed a lighted cigarette between the poor fellow's lips.

"You'll be all right, don't try to walk, save your strength. We've signaled for

the ambulance. You're a brave guy."

"I'm brave, all right," the other replied, with weak irony. "But it's a good thing I ain't a pianist!"

A light truck, marked with red crosses on top and sides, came up. The young soldier was placed on a stretcher, lifted inside. A medical corps sergeant leaned from the car. "You're Lieutenant Debourg? They want you at the P.C. Our chaps brought in a pair of Boches."

The post of commandment was down near the port, in a building somewhat larger than the others. Judging from the smells, it had held ship stores. Debourg paused a moment, to look at the port. It had suffered again. There was a lengthening row of canvas-covered heaps, dead flesh under cover. These constant losses, without fighting, would prove demoralizing before long.

In the office, he found Captain Bosquel, of his company, an intelligence officer, Lieutenant Berrier, two of his colleagues. Two prisoners stood at attention against one wall, away from the burst windows. They wore greenish uniforms, probably belonged to a battalion of Tyrolean Sharpshooters, though they had no papers and had torn off all regimental indications. Both were young, not more than twenty, both sturdy and deeply tanned.

"They pretend to have trouble with my German," Berrier said. "Try them out."

Debourg sat down, gestured for the two to come nearer. They marched forward stiffly, froze again, four paces away. The lieutenant smiled.

"*Also, nun fertig mit dem Krieg*—" he addressed the first, a corporal. "So now the war's finished—"

"Me no understand. Me no talk," the fellow replied in broken French. His jaws shut so firmly the muscles swelled. Debourg knew the type. Here was a superb, successful overlay of Nazi discipline on an already stubborn mountaineer. Threats of death, blows, arguments, all would be useless. Suffering would make him a martyr. Debourg nodded to the guards. "Take him away. Now, you, my lad, come forward—"

The man gave his name as Friedrich Kauser, and was willing enough to talk. As he said at once, what did he know that everyone did not know already? His battalion's records had been taken at Elvegaard, after the fight, anyway. Sure, he was a Tyrolean. He had landed from a ship at Oslo, May 10th, been around Bergen, too. He had been brought north in a transport plane. Yes, he had landed at Elvegaard itself, had never been to Narvik.

Sure, there were men of other battalions in the reigon. No, he did not know how many, because no one had told him. Yes, indeed, they had all the food and ammunition they needed. Yes, some of the stuff was dropped on parachutes, from planes. Yes, even small cannon and shells had been sent that way. No, he did not think Germany would lose the war.

"We are beating you in France," he stated.

The officers listening to him had been informed of the start of the German drive through Holland and Belgium, by a wireless report relayed from Tromsoe on May 12th. But if the general commanding had further news, he had not seen fit to give it out. They pressed the prisoner for details, but soon started to laugh at his fantastic claims. The French Army routed, the British pushed back toward the sea. What the Germans had failed to do in over four years of war before, they would have accomplished in a few days?

"Filled with propaganda," Lieutenant Berrier said. "Drop that, and try him with a few questions—"

Kauser replied willingly. Yes, the morale was excellent. The Germans expected the victories to the south to open the path for real reinforcements, not dribbles from the air. He had been captured in the hills beyond Elvegaard by a patrol of Legionnaires, ski-troopers. No, he could not say whether the German forces driven from Bjerkvik would continue to retreat toward Sweden or undertake to join the defenders of Narvik by crossing the Rombaken Fjord. All he really knew was the order given to his section: Keep touch with the enemy's patrols, delay them.

"Do the Austrians like to fight for Hitler?"

"No one asked them." Very seriously, the young Tyrolean clicked his heels, snapped his right hand in a sudden gesture. *"Heil Hitler!"* He relaxed into a grin. "That's all there is to it. You salute and you march."

"I'll telephone this in to Brigade Headquarters," Berrier said, rising. "They can relay it to the *Vindictive*, from where it will be sent to General Bethouard." He laughed. "I hope it's useful! Talk to him a while, and see if he knows anything else, will you? Then join me, if you have a few minutes. There are some comedy scenes."

LEFT alone with the prisoner, Debourg soon saw that the young fellow was not as stupid as he pretended. He talked freely, but gave nothing of value. But certain of his expressions stirred old memories in Debourg.

For some time, he struggled against the desire to ask personal questions. He shared the Legion's belief that no man should meddle either with the past or with filth, because meddling always brought unpleasantness. But this strange meeting of two countrymen as foes, each one fighting for a country not his own, seemed to close the circle, to re-establish contact with his old life.

He gave the lad a cigarette.

"Where are you from, in Tyrol, Kauser?"

"A small place, Mister Captain—"

"Lieutenant—"

"Yes, Mister Lieutenant, a small place: Ober-Zwiesel. It is—"

"Yes, so, so! One takes a coach from the railway station."

Kauser grinned broadly. The sentences came quickly. Know the Zuckerhutti? Of course, and the Wildspitz also. Mister Lieutenant has traveled. Oh, who doesn't know the Tyrol? Right, indeed, right! You have many vacationers from the big cities, from Vienna? Oh, yes, Mister Lieutenant, ever so many.

Debourg started to mention names, all caution gone. The Austria left by the treaties had not been a very large country. And the families known to Debourg moved in definite routine, as to schools, travel, sports and vacations. Kauser had worked in a summer hotel, and had a wide knowledge of visitors. Many he knew by sight, others by reputation. Talk about summer people forms a large part of the gossip in any winter gathering in the mountains.

"So and so? In the Army. Yes, aviation, of course. So and so? He is a refugee in America. He was sweet on the innkeeper's third daughter, and she got a postal card signed with his pet name. That one? He was a lieutenant in the Tenth Sharpshooters. Killed in Poland, September 13th. Oh, him? He was executed in April, 1938. You mean his younger brother, Karl? Oh, he's been dead quite a while. Back in 1936. My second-cousin was his guide, and had his leg broken. Crawled three kilometers to the refuge hut to signal for a searching party. It happened this way—"

Debourg had some trouble cutting short the anecdote. Kauser was a mountain man, and an accident near home remained more important than the paltry war now going on. The lieutenant then casually dropped a question.

"Know anything about the Riegersburgs, Fritz?"

"Oh, sure. They're well-known around our way. Years ago, they used to keep up their own lodge. Old Von Riegersburg, the one with the limp, was for the union. But he had been mixed up with the Stahremberg Movement at one time, and that cropped up after the liberation of Austria. He disappeared. He was shot, I heard. There was an older son, but he hasn't been around for years. People say he turned out badly, and died in South America. Max, that's the younger, I know by sight. He was in the mountains for the hunting season in 1938."

"Was he in the Army then?"

"Yes. Cavalry. That's all motorized now, though."

"Is he in Norway?"

"I don't think so, Mister Lieutenant. No tanks up this way, you know. And when I was at Bergen, there were a lot of home boys in various outfits, and they didn't mention him, as they would have if—" Kauser went on talking, but

the close questioning had aroused his curiosity, and he was considering Debourg with more attention, shifting his position so as to see clearly beneath the brim of the helmet.

The Legionnaire tossed out another name at random. Chance favored him, for the prisoner showed interest.

"That one? Oh, he had very bad luck. You know, he was for Dollfuss. He did some shooting in 1934, so he knew he would be shot if caught. He was disguised, on a train, almost in Switzerland, when somebody spotted him and told the Black Shooters. They dragged him out, right there on the platform, and beat him to death."

Debourg let him talk this time, for his mind was elsewhere. He had known that his father was dead for more than a year. While on leave in Meknes, he had picked up a Swiss newspaper dropped by a friend on a table, and the name had leaped from a long list of victims of the new regime. It was odd that the old man had been for the reunion of Austria to Germany for years, and that he had showed a tendency toward the Nazis. His earlier dabbling in politics had come up to cause his end. A sad finish for a man who had gone about for more than twenty years with a Russian bullet in his hip.

He had somehow imagined that his brother, Max, who had shared the same views as his father, had been forced to flee. He was glad for him that it was not so. And even more satisfied because he was not in Norway. Debourg had had reason to complain of both his father and his brother. There had never been much love between Max and himself.

But blood was blood, and it was better so.

"Well, Fritz Kauser, good luck to you," Debourg concluded, holding out his hand. "You're well out of it."

The Tyrolean shook hands, but gave a wry smile.

"Mister Lieutenant loves to joke."

HE WAS taken away by the guards. Debourg looked after him, and shrugged. The young chap was right, it was a joke to congratulate him. From now on, Kauser would be exposed to the air raids of the Nazis, and bombs do not distinguish nationalities. If he was taken away from Norway on a transport, to danger from the air would be added danger from torpedoes. How safe he had been, fighting the French!

The thought made Debourg furious, as always. The sloth of the French government was incredible, and it did not appear that the British had more foresight. Rumor had it that British and Colonial troops landed at other ports of Norway, farther south, had been knocked about badly by aviation. And up here, around Narvik, the expedition probably would win victories on land until too decimated, day after day, by air bombardment to hold on to what it took.

Debourg left the room to seek Lieutenant Berrier, of the Intelligence. He saw outside the building a long queue of civilians, men, women and children, shuffling patiently in the shambles of the street.

Several small boys, sturdy little fellows with light hair and red cheeks, were picking up souvenirs, belt buckles, buttons, and sometimes exhibited some gruesome find. Two or three veteran Legionnaires had taken it on themselves to control their curiosity, but as they spoke Norwegian not at all, did not do much good.

The lieutenant pushed through the line, entered a room where Berrier and two sergeants were seated, behind small tables.

There were also a couple of local civilians there, wearing arm-bands, serving as interpreters. After a certain number of questions, one of the military men would lift a rubber-stamp, apply it to some piece of paper.

"Show that at the request of any military sentry or officer—"

This was spoken in French, except in the case of the lieutenant, who had been a professor of languages in Norway before mobilization, and translated by one of the local interpreters into Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, or into dialects that Debourg could not even identify.

As he hestitated to disturb Berrier,

he felt a touch on his elbow, from behind, and someone whispered in German: "Go at once. There are a few people around here who might remember you. Please, darling—"

He turned, looked down at the woman who had given him this warning. In contrast with most of the young women in the crowd, she had a small, heart-shaped, delicate face, with very wide, beautiful brown eyes. A fur coat screened her body, but she was not built along northern specifications, that was evident. The normal type, blond, pink-faced, broad of stem and stern, was in nine cases out of ten swathed in sport coats and baggy gray flannel slacks.

Debourg removed his helmet, and said: "Madame is evidently mistaken. I do not believe anyone here would remember me." He grinned amiably. "But so far as you are concerned, madame, it is a source of deep regret to me."

Her clear white skin tinted quickly with a blush.

"Sorry," she said, still in a low voice. "I mistook you for my cousin. Did not see your uniform or—we're all so excited and upset. You do look like him, at first."

"And why shouldn't your cousin be here, madame?"

"He is a volunteer in a Norwegian battalion—left for the Finnish War, you know. I've heard that the battalion is now in the neighborhood, and knowing him, I thought he might have come to town without leave. When he served his regular army time, he was always in trouble."

"Your German is excellent, madame."

"Yours also, sir, for a French soldier."

Both laughed. She conversed easily, without a trace of embarrassment now that she had explained. Debourg was intrigued by her. He was twenty-eight and did not as yet divide all women into those who could and those who could not cook. And a bantering, flirtatious tone was not displeasing after so many years of direct approach.

"You're not Norwegian, madame?"

"You're wrong. I am most Norwegian."

"But you do not live always in this region—"

"I was born in Harstadt. I'll wager you never heard of it."

"Not only heard of it, madame. We stopped there on our way here. Looked rather bleak and desolate to me, but it will never seem so in my memory now that I have seen what it produces—"

She grasped his sleeve lightly between her fingers, and he noted their slenderness, the manicured nails. Her teeth showed in a laugh. "And whenever you smell Harstadt, my face shall lift in your mind—"

"In fact—" Debourg found himself without words, and joined in her laughter. "I confess that my compliment machine doesn't function well, madame. Grown rusty from lack of use."

Without being aware of it, the two had edged farther and farther through the crowd in the room, until they stood in an angle. Debourg saw Berrier's round, smiling face bobbing toward him.

"Eh there, Legionnaire, you're moving in on staff territory. Hands—and eyes—off Mademoiselle Tholfson, or we'll cut your throat!" He touched his lips to the small, slender hand given him. "Come in another room, mademoiselle. We serve tea. And you can drag your new conquest along. I don't think we could loosen him without a boat hook—" He playfully looked around. "But there are such hooks around, if it becomes necessary."

THEY joined a group of officers in the kitchen. One of them had prepared tea over a gasolene stove, there were tins of biscuits opened on the table, on shelves. Everyone there seemed to know Miss Tholfson very well. And her French was even better than her German. She seemed perfectly at ease in this crowd of young men, had thrown back her coat, removed her toque. Debourg saw that she had more than prettiness. She was beautiful.

Berrier was explaining his present task.

"The Germans receive news constantly from our side. We live in a glass house. Also, civilian life must be considered. So we are to evacuate all civilians away from the combat zones. Send

them across the fjord, even to the Lofoten Islands. But you know how it is, the people protest that they want to stay near their homes. That means their reasons must be looked into. Without criticizing your excellent countrymen, mademoiselle, some of them are rather stubborn—and very little check was kept on the transients—"

"My country was neutral, Lieutenant, and our percentage of crime was very low. We had no thieves, and the only murders we ever had were among foreign sailors in the ports, in brawls."

Berrier laid a finger on her shoulder. "And mademoiselle, beautiful and intelligent though she appears, is nothing more than a stubborn Norwegian herself. She will not go to Ballangen, where she would be safe from air raids. She wants to remain here."

"My father is in Narvik," she said, "and I am anxious about him. Also, he had a place here—it has been blown up. But his friends wish to keep me. If not, I can go and live with his branch manager at Lilleberg. That's not far from here—"

"Lilleberg's still held by the Nazis, mademoiselle."

"But it will be in your hands in a couple of days."

"Let's hope so. But even when we hold it, it will not be much safer than here at Bjerkvik. I think your father would prefer you to be safe." Berrier shrugged, spread his arms. "Give me one good reason for you to remain."

"The best in the world, Lieutenant. I love my father. And I can serve his interests by keeping track of what happens to his property here and there."

"No one can refuse you anything, mademoiselle. You'll have your permit to sojourn, and a pass for our lines."

A liaison officer, who was returning to Brigade Headquarters, in the hills of the Peninsula near Ojord, escorted her out. He would stop his car near the house where she was living.

"Nice specimen, eh, Debourg?" Berrier said.

"Handsome woman, or girl. But I don't think she should be allowed to get about too much. She speaks German—" and he related what had happened, how he had become acquainted with the girl.

"Haven't I seen you somewhere before?" Berrier said, laughing loudly. "She picked you up, son, picked you up. It's your fatal beauty. I know she fills the conventional picture of the lady spy rather well. Beautiful, intelligent, flirtatious, a linguist. That's romance, old chap, pure romance. I served in the Intelligence in the last war—yes, I'm forty-six—and I'll tell you what a real woman spy looks like. She's forty-odd, fat and plain, a housewife and a mother. She has a very good commercial reason for being where you see her, selling cakes or newspapers out of a basket at a railroad station, for instance. She notes the numerals on tunic-collars, the directions of the trains. I saw one like that shot, and she wept to the last moment, yelling that she had two sons at the front, and we couldn't do that to her. She was so dumb that she did not exactly connect the information she sent in with our losses in an attack."

"How does she know we intend to occupy Lilleberg, eh?"

"You're suspicious, aren't you? Give her credit for intelligence. Everyone knows the Polish Brigade was sent to Ankeness to attack Narvik from the south. So it's plain we intend to attack it from the north. And to cross the Rombaken Fjord, we must hold Ojord and Lilleberg. If the Boches don't know that, they'd better send their generals back to school."

"Nevertheless, a woman from nowhere—"

"Eh, eh there!" Berrier lifted his hand, smiling. "You're assailing my professional integrity! I checked up on her at once. Born at Harstadt, June 8th, 1918—that makes her twenty-two. Father is Maths Tholfson, mother was Desiree Legueff, French, born in Saint-Malo. The father has some interest in cod fishing, in timber, and is connected with a French fishing syndicate, exports cod roe for bait used in fishing by our Bretons. Her uncle was a member of the Storting for years, his son is in the Norwegian forces now, after fighting in Finland last year. They're pretty solid people, loyal Norwegians.

"She spent several years in French

schools, lived with a paternal aunt in Germany for two or three months at a time. She plays tennis better than average. She has a lot of kronen coming to her when she marries. She is engaged to a Swede she met last year on a cruise to the North Cape. I have questioned old residents here, and Norwegian officials and officers—they've known her all her life. Her father is really in Narvik, and is known as pro-French everywhere in this region. Wanted her to marry a Frenchman.

"Now, let's sum it up. She's part French, pro-French, has plenty of money, will inherit much more, is engaged to be married to a man of her choice. What would she be a spy for? Patriotism, money, love—all attended to. Why would she risk execution then?"

"I didn't know, Berrier."

"You didn't know, right. You thought all she had to do was smile at me and bat her eyes a bit to get her permit to stay and a pass, eh? I'm too fat and middle-aged, but with me sentiment starts where professional interest ends."

"What do you think of the situation here?"

"Frankly, not so well. Our side has taken an awful licking in the south, around Andalsnes and Namsos. We're doing all right here, save for the air raids. But we're not likely to get reinforcements until the situation settles a bit in France, and surely there will be no aviation to spare for us. No matter how well we work, we'll keep losing men from air bombs. I don't dare give you figures. And even if the Germans cannot send more men into Norway because of the French Campaign, they have enough in the south who will work their way up here by the first or second week in June." Berrier touched Debourg's elbow lightly. "I know where you come from, and I know you can face facts. I wouldn't talk this way to a Frenchman. We haven't learned as yet to take bitter blows."

"They're tough," Debourg murmured.

"No tougher than we are. But they're prepared. Here's a truck going your way."

Girls rave about the shaves you get
With thrifty, keen-edged Thin Gillette.
This blade skims off the toughest stubble—
Costs ten for four—saves time and trouble!
New kind of edges on steel hard enough to cut glass
THIN
Gillette
BLADES
Gillette
4 for 10c
8 for 19c
Produced By The Maker Of The Famous Gillette Blue Blade
Save Extra Money! Get The Big New Economy Package, 12 For 27c

Debourg went back to his section.

The men were occupied building little huts for themselves, like small boys playing at exploring. The officers saw with satisfaction that the various elements were beginning to mix. For instance, some of the Spaniards were seated with old "Africans," swapping yarns. Old Steuwer, who had deserted the French Legion, in which he had served nine years, to join the Spanish under Franco, was comparing notes with Zantapar. The miracle of the Legion was operating. There was no hatred between the two, obscure soldiers in great causes. The helplessness of the individual to resist the circumstance he was in, was here tacitly acknowledged.

CHAPTER III

TIME TO KILL

FRANÇOIS DEBOURG had come to the Legion less to forget than to eat. To use a Legion expression, he had "enlisted for the mess-kit." Yet he remembered, sometimes with a grin and sometimes with some bitterness, having sent back a bottle of expensive champagne as too tepid for his use.

His branch of the Von Riegersburg family had been somewhat obscure, and for a long time, the right to the name had been contested by more glamorous kindred. Small imperial officials under the Austro-Hungarian Government, subalterns in infantry regiments, his ancestors had not been famous. But his grandfather had left the army and launched into business, achieving a considerable fortune. And his father, although he had served as a major for eighteen months in the World War, been decorated and wounded, had been an industrialist rather than an army man.

François remembered little of the unpleasant things connected with the aftermath of the World War in Austria, the debacle following the Treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain. Because his wise father had had investments abroad, some in enemy countries, others in neutral nations. In 1916, some weeks after the birth of his brother Max, their mother had taken them to Sweden, to avoid the hardships and food restrictions. For her sister had married a prosperous Swede, a manufacturer. The two boys had not gone back home until 1922.

Even then, and until after their mother's death, they had not lived in Austria more than a few weeks at a time. They had gone to schools in Switzerland for a while, in Lausanne or Zurich, had spent much time in Paris. Later, when he grew to manhood, François understood better why his mother had not liked to remain at home. Her husband was domineering, absorbed by business and pleasures of his own. No particular pressure was placed on the boys to decide on a future career. François was sixteen and Max twelve when their mother was killed in a motoring accident, on the Corniche Road near Monte Carlo. Their father came in person to seek them, as it was an important occasion.

Before very long, Von Riegersburg senior abandoned hope of doing much with François, who had aspirations to become an architect. He preferred Max, still a boy, who accepted his ideas greedily, was not tainted by foreign contacts to the same extent. The father was far from niggardly. If anything, François often thought, he had too much money. He studied as an interne, in Vienna, then in Graz, and long before he should have been allowed freedom, he took "study trips" to Paris, to Rome and Munich.

Max wanted only one thing: to become an officer. That flattered his father, who had a romantic outlook on his own career in the army and loved to relate war stories. When François came home for visits, at Christmas or Easter, he would meet Max, already stiff and stern, and would listen to him speak to their father about national politics. Both the father and Max were *anschluss* partisans, wanted the reunion of Austria to Germany. Both started to call François, who had no convictions, "our Communist"—good-humoredly at first, then with something of an edge.

François, who was then Franz, did not resent that. He had other concerns and other amusements. He studied without

effort, passed the various examinations with but few failures, obtaining permission and funds to go on long vacation tours. He swam and he ski-ed, he climbed mountains and drove fast cars, and in between, he won third prize in a competition for a railway station of modern design. Six feet tall, fair, with blond hair, he was considered very handsome. He was strong, had often engaged, as a lark, in village wrestling tournaments, tossing the "yokels" with a few tricks picked up from a professional befriended in a Munich beer hall.

He was a few months over twenty when he fell in love seriously, with a charming young woman he had met in a night-club in Basle. She came from an excellent family in Chile, he learned from her own lips, and from his own eyes he knew that she had a tall, graceful body, superb eyes and magnificent teeth. As a concession to the necessities of life, she did a little dancing as a professional in clubs, but that was nothing against her. Modern women earned their living.

Of course, he was not naive enough not to know what his father would say to a suggestion that he be permitted to marry her. His father was very fond of entertainers himself, as everyone knew in Vienna, but he objected to attending church with them. He not only refused permission, but he suggested that it was time for Franz to attend to his civic duties, and to serve in one of the privately organized armies.

Franz refused. He was not fond of uniforms, and he did not wish to pivot right and left at the bark of a sergeant. So his father cut down his funds to a small monthly stipend. Franz went to France first, then when his girl proceeded to England for a theatrical engagement, where his money would not last long, he decided to wait for her in Munich. He thought he was in poverty then, which was to make him laugh ruefully later.

THUS he happened to be in Germany when Hitler rose to power. His first reaction was that it did not concern him. A man who had money to pay his rent, who did not shout his opinions from the roof tops, got along smoothly anywhere. He did resent a bit the numerous questions asked of him by groups of hard-faced, resolute young men in black or brown. He did not like to be called upon for an apology for some joking remark made to some friend in a cafe. And he did not like to leave some old companion at the door of a public restaurant because the man happened to be one-fourth Jewish.

He went home for a visit, expecting to find his father and brother pro-Hitler, as they were for the *anschluss*. But at the time, both were for the Patriotic Front, and chiefly concerned with the threat represented by the Social Democrats, whom they called Communists. Hitler, they said, was a tramp, a figure-head, used by the German heavy industry as a scare-crow for the Bolsheviks. He was a low-born Austrian, and really someone nobody could ask to dinner.

There was a quarrel that time because Franz protested the fierce repression of the Social Democrats by the army and police, the use of cannon against tenements. He was told, which may have been quite right, that he was a drone, a fool, who did not understand that certain breeds must be squashed as ruthlessly as cockroaches.

He went back to Munich because the glamorous Chilean wrote him that she would be there. While he waited for her, he spent much time with men he had known for a long time, young and old students of art, music, architecture. Beardless and bearded, they had all grown very serious on matters political, and raised the right hand to heil Hitler without cracking a smile.

This, which should have warned Franz, only irked him.

On a sunny spring afternoon, he and a comrade went for a long hike, complete with canes and knapsacks. Both had sketch-books and pencils, to give the expedition an artistic purpose. They stopped several times to partake of beer and food. Late in the afternoon, they were going back toward the city at a good pace, when they were disturbed by loud shouts. From one of the dainty

houses in a village, a dozen brawny young men emerged, dressed in brown, wearing semi-military garb, carrying pistols and clubs.

They were pushing ahead of them a round little man with a bald head, who was obviously about to collapse from fear. Behind them trotted a large woman, thirty-five or forty, pleading in a shrill voice.

"What's wrong here?" Franz asked of a bystander. For there were many persons around, the whole of the inn, crowded for Sunday revels, had poured into the street. A man grinned and gave information.

"He's a Jew, see, and she was hiding him. She wants her money, he owes her money." The man shook his head. "She's a fool to admit it. They'll come back and attend to her for concealing him."

One of the brown-shirts, annoyed by her insistence, turned and slapped her face loudly. Loudly, for the blow echoed and seemed to fill the street with noise. She staggered, yelped, and instinctively clutched at him. This time, he smote her with his clenched fist, and she dropped flat on her face.

"That's needless—" Franz started to say. But his companion caught his arm. "Shut up, you dummy! It's the law."

The little man had turned, and seemed about to go toward the woman. One of his guard whirled him away, and booted him hard from behind, yelling for him to go on. The laughter that greeted the kick encouraged the young brute, and he kicked four or five times more, the older, smaller man hopping comically each time.

"What has he done?" Franz wondered.

"He was hiding."

From what was happening, hiding had been common sense. The cheerful crowd from the inn started to shout for more. And the kicks resumed. The little man fell, picked himself up, turning to protest. And the next kick caught him in the groin. He fell again, writhed, screaming. Two men lifted him, one slapping him hard with the flat of his hand on the bald head.

"Go on, march—march!"

Another kick found the proper mark. Franz looked around. Surely, the police would appear and stop this. But there was the local policeman on the inn's steps, smoothing his mustache. Suddenly, Franz lost caution. He felt that if he did not interfere, he would always carry a sensation of shame inside of his brain. He stepped toward the group, shaking off his friend's restraining hands, tapped the fellow who seemed in charge on the shoulder.

"Take it easy, there. You're supposed to arrest him, not to kill him—"

"Who are you?" the other asked, as the whole group came to a stop.

Franz gave his name, which he hoped would sound important.

"Are you an official?" the other asked.

"No. But—"

"Then shut up and go away. I don't want to hear another word out of you." He turned and gestured. "Come on, march!" And the walk resumed, with a kick.

Franz grasped the young man by the shoulder, twisted him around. Possibly, he had lost his temper enough to strike. He never knew. Three or four of the others leaped on him, caught his arms, clutched his legs. His cane was torn from his grasp, his wrists held behind his back. The leader looked at him, not angrily, half-smiling.

"I warned you," he said, simply.

And he swung his fist to Franz's face, once, twice, three times. Franz struggled, and the others went to work. There was a deluge of blows, his body ached in twenty places at once. He fell to the road, was kicked, hauled to his feet. Then he found himself hustled behind the other, his nose streaming blood, his teeth aching, half-conscious, almost blinded.

HE SPENT the night in a small cell of the village lockup, was rushed to Munich in the morning. There he faced a police magistrate, who questioned him at some length. The man, a fat, pleasant official, nodded several times.

"An Austrian, yes. A foreigner. You should allow Germans to handle their own business, when you accept their hospitality. I'd advise you to leave Bavaria as soon as convenient. You are

to pay a fine of one thousand marks."

"I won't pay. I appeal to my consulate. I—"

"As a friend of Austrians, I advise you to pay, young man. It will save you trouble. I'd have to keep you in jail, and who knows what your hot temper and want of discipline would bring on your head? The fine is extremely light punishment for an assault upon our police."

Franz saw that he had better pay. He paid.

"*Heil Hitler,*" the magistrate said, rising and lifting his hand.

Franz was nudged from behind, lifted his hand obediently.

"*Heil Hitler.*"

He went back to his hotel. There he met the man who had been on the hike with him. But he had no chance to speak to him, for the fellow literally ran out of sight. He asked the desk-man, a Swiss, for information concerning the little Jewish fellow.

"I could find out probably," the hotel man admitted. "But I won't try. I won't be able to keep my job here much longer, anyway, because of some new rule. I want to leave intact. My advice is to go elsewhere, respected sir."

Franz thought that he meant out of Bavaria or Munich. But he understood later "out of the hotel." He had had a doctor patch up his face, take a stitch here and there, and had gone to the dining-room for dinner, when six men in uniform appeared. They headed for him. In the lead was the young brute who had struck him first. Franz rose and exchanged salutes and heils.

"I have come for the public apology, sir."

"I have paid a fine."

"That's the legal atonement. I was insulted. You grabbed my shoulder."

Some of the guests stared curiously, some smiled, others kept on eating with their eyes on their plates, a few left the room.

"I owe you no apology," Franz said.

The others grasped his arms, held his wrists behind his back.

"You must apologize, sir," the other repeated with a polite smirk. "I would regret—"

Franz understood that he had no chance, that by refusing he would play into their hands. The words choked him, but he apologized, corrrecting himself as the other dictated: "Yes, to your uniform. Yes, I apologize to your badge. Yes, also to you personally."

They released him, stepped briskly away.

"Your apology is accepted, sir. *Heil Hitler!*"

Franz lifted his bruised arm, uttered the words in reply.

They left, stamping their heels on the floor. Something seemed to have given way in Franz. Perhaps because he had led such an irresponsible life, it was the first time that he had been compelled to obey by force. He experienced such utter humiliation, such raging helplessness, that a doctor was called. The drugs calmed him, he slept, but when he awoke, the grinning face of the storm trooper was before him, lurked at his shoulder in the mirror. And when he went out to try to forget, he saw his foe, in the flesh, and had to reply to his salute.

He wanted to leave Munich. But he could not. He seemed riveted to the city. There was something weirdly fascinating in passing the young brute, in meeting his arrogant grin, his cold, piggish eyes. Inside a month, Franz knew much of the man. His name, the fact that he came from a very poor family, that he had been apprenticed to a butcher, that he pursued women relentlessly.

"Why do I think of him all the time?" Franz wondered, after a while. Then he knew the answer. "Because I must kill him."

He was to realize later that he had not been wholly sane during those days. For instance, he had paid small attention to the young woman, who had passed through Munich on her way to Berlin. He recalled her visit but vaguely.

For the first time in his life, he applied himself and was thorough. He bought a time-keeper's watch, timed himself along certain stretches of the city at various times of day. While on hikes in the country, he computed the

difference in time over a few hundred meters between his walk and a run. The man's habits had supplied him with a plan. He knew where he spent his leisure time, the hour he had to report at his station.

Franz found an old, baggy overcoat in a trunk, a conspicuous garment, cream-colored, almost white. He removed all tags from it, looked for marks of identification. He poured granulated

"You hit me," the storm trooper whispered. "You hit me!"

sugar, salt, ashes, sawdust, in the pockets, emptied them again. So much for the dust test, he thought. He had purchased that garment at Le Touquet, three years before, and if the police could trace it to that French seaside resort and to him, they must be good!

He stole a large, thick towel from a bathing establishment. He had a pistol, which he must discard *after*. Little risk that it would be traced, as he had bought it from an ex-soldier in Belgium, a sort of tramp who did not even know his name. Bought it or taken it as security for a loan.

ON THE NIGHT he had selected, he sent his baggage to the railroad station. He bought a ticket for Vienna on the evening express. He was on the platform early, pacing up and down, looking at his watch. He knew he would be remembered, as he spoke to several employees. He left the station, crossed to a restaurant. He entered the establishment, located his coat, stuffed where he had left it the preceding evening. Heaven be praised for careless porters! He carried it out, over his arm.

He did not feel very excited. He was only perturbed at the thought that the man would not be where he expected him. In that case, he would have to change his plans, perhaps even go to Vienna and return. But for four weeks, on this exact day of the week, at this exact time, the trooper had left a certain house in a certain street. There were such streets near all railway stations. The man would walk into town from there, to meet two friends in a beer hall.

Franz loitered on the corner where the other must pass. Several girls went by, two or three joked about his canary coat. His train was leaving in eleven minutes, in ten. And the man appeared on the street, turned to look up at a window, touched his cap. He strolled along briskly, adjusting his belt-buckle. The fool had on white gloves. He came up even with Franz, looked at him casually, turned the corner, hesitated, returned, looked closer. Franz returned the stare and did not utter a word.

In his own mind, he was showing mercy. If the fellow walked right on, or was polite, he would let him go, and head for the station.

"Eh, the Viennese! Don't you greet old friends any more?"

"Good evening," Franz said.

"And no more? Come, come, just because your black eyes are gone, you mustn't forget your lessons. They cost a thousand marks each, remember. *Heil Hitler!*" He dropped his arm, edged nearer, clucking his tongue. "What a poor memory!"

Franz's hand moved in the coat pocket. The muzzle of the pistol was in line with the man's middle, slanting upward. The fool, Franz could feel him pushing against the weapon. He had looked up and down the street. There were two of his ilk in sight, he considered himself safe. His voice took on the rasp of authority.

"Come on, the Viennese, come on—"

"Nine minutes, eight minutes," Franz thought. He saw the other's meaty hand close into a big fist. He saw the beginning of his stupid, bovine grin. And he pressed the trigger once, twice.

He both felt and heard the shots. A woman with a shopping bag, on the other side of the narrow street, bobbed her head up and looked around. Then she trotted on. The man was leaning on Franz, breathing deeply.

Slowly, easily, Franz swung him around, against the wall of the house. The fellow's hand had relaxed, hung at his side. His eyes were wide, and he whispered: "You hit me, you hit me!" Then he closed his eyes.

Franz walked away, turned the corner in a fifth of a second. He started to run, turned the next corner, dodged a man on a bicycle, entered a smaller street, almost deserted. He pulled off his coat, and a few steps farther threw it over a wall linking two houses. The pistol wrapped in the towel was inside. Franz trotted on, came to a more frequented street, remembered the glove he had worn, stripped it off, dropped it in the gutter.

There was no sound of pursuit, no shouting behind him. Had the man fallen, was he still standing, propped

against that wall? Was he dead? How long would he stay there undiscovered as a dead man, if he was dead, and standing?

Franz ran faster now. The station was in sight. Nothing strange, anywhere, in a man running toward a railroad station. He showed his ticket, ran onto the platform. Under the glass canopy, the long row of cars lengthened into the night. He climbed into one of them, shouldered his way through the other passengers. His hand-baggage was in the compartment he had reserved. The man who had carried them, although tipped in advance, was on the platform. He smiled. Franz gave him a small bill.

"A good journey to Vienna, sir."

"Thank you, my friend. You see, I made it."

"And in ample time, too, sir."

Franz felt like saying quietly: *Just time to kill a man.* But the fellow had gone. The train did not start. He had a first-class compartment, with a private washroom attached. He went in and started to drink tepid water. He was still locked in when the train slid from the station, after the usual preliminary jerks. He turned on the shaded reading lamp, opened a magazine. He felt intensely calm and relaxed. He fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV

A FOOL AND HIS MONEY

A KNOCK on his door awoke him. He opened and saw the porter, and behind him two huge men in dark uniforms. They had come to arest him.

"We're in Freilassing, sir," the employee said. "Sorry to wake you up, but you forgot to give me your passport to be stamped with the rest."

Franz offered his passport. One of the officials grasped it in a big, reddish hand, snapped it open, mumbled, snapped it shut after stamping it. "All humbug, sir," he said cordially. "Criminals and spies always have perfect passports. How is old Munich, sir?"

He did not wait for an answer and vanished.

Franz got newspapers at Linz. There was nothing about a killing in Munich. In Vienna, the papers carried nothing of interest to him. He took a cab to his family's home. He felt no remorse, just a tremendous relief that it was over. The housekeeper handed him several letters, with a disapproving frown, for she was aware that nothing so perfumed could be pure.

His fiancée was coming to Vienna. She had been granted forty-eight hours to leave Germany. She wrote in a fantastic French, studded with poorly spelled German phrases, the whole constructed like Spanish. There was some nonsense about her, she said, because she passed herself off as a Chilean in her work, when she was in reality a Brazilian. She was supposed to be part non-Aryan too, which, she stated, was mad. If she had been like some girls in the entertainment business, willing to comply with certain requests from officials, everything would have been all right. But she was not, and it was not.

His brother, Max, came in first. He greeted Franz without much warmth, seemed very stiff and aloof in a new gray-blue uniform, with a sash, crossbelts, epaulettes, and a gold-braided collar that hit his ears. He was only a cadet, but resembled a Mexican general of the picturesque era.

"You're in for a tough evening, Franz. The old one's heard from your de luxe chicken. He doesn't want her here, and I don't blame him."

"Oh for the chastity of fifty-seven and the purity of eighteen," Franz hummed. "You're the handsomest thing I've seen since the beadle at the cathedral died."

"Where the devil do you come from this time?"

"Munich. Didn't you know?"

"I can't keep track of you. Things are pretty hot there, eh? It'll be a good thing when we get a cleaning-out here. The theaters are full of impossible people." He smiled charmingly. "Other places, too. We need Hitler."

"Don't let the old man hear that."

"Oh, he's coming around. It's hopeless for us to expect to get anywhere by ourselves. We're too small. We must be protected either by Hitler or Mussolini.

I prefer the first. Of course, you don't. Your fondness for the swarthier breeds is becoming famous."

"You'll get your pretty clothes rumpled if you keep on," Franz informed him.

There was an icy dinner. The baron waited until later to broach the subject, sending Max off tactfully. "Your friend wired me for two hundred dollars. Possibly she was afraid to ask the same sum in schillings. Question of life and death, she said. I complied, this once. But I have received information. She's not to be a guest here, do you hear?"

"Wouldn't think of it, father. She's used to good plumbing."

"And if you try to marry her here, I'll find some way of getting you both out of the country. You may be above ridicule, but neither your brother nor myself share your freedom."

THINGS were rather quiet for a fortnight, then Franz was summoned for another interview by his father. This time, the arena was the little business office next to the library, which meant serious business.

Von Riegersburg adjusted his glasses, lighted a cigar.

"Franz, did you murder anyone in Munich?"

"I did, father."

There was a brief silence, and Franz felt that he should add something in explanation, to be fair. He indicated the slight scars left, told of the beating, the prison, the fine, and the apology. The older man locked his fingers together, smoked, then nodded. "It's understandable. Didn't think you had it in you."

"How did you learn, father?"

"Police chief called me in. The Germans will not ask for your extradition, as they have a moral conviction but no proof. Only circumstantial evidence. But the *Heimatschutz* have you marked. They're the Nazi partisans here. Blaming you now would be useless. With your kind of life, it was bound to happen. I'm glad it was not something like theft. Needless to say, you should change climates."

"I understand that."

"For one reason or another, taxes, contributions to the party, I am not rolling in cash. But I am able to give you a sum large enough to go abroad and start some serious business. You are, I am told, something of a linguist. That should help. The money will be given you tomorrow morning at the bank. Arranged for. But first, you must sign a few papers for me—"

Von Riegersburg indicated several legal-looking documents on his desk with a flowing gesture.

"What are those?"

"Protection. You are to renounce certain rights as my son. The use of the title, for instance, unimportant though it is. It may forward your brother's career. Inheritance rights in property belonging to your mother's estate. As I am to give you about ten years' income from it in a lump, you'll admit it's just. Inheritance rights from me, too, to avoid suits and such things later." The old man shrugged. "You know that neither

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myself nor your brother are grasping. That when things clear up, after the coming wars, either one of us will gladly grant you some sort of income."

"I know that, yes, father. You have been most generous."

Von Riegersburg coughed a little, flushed.

"I really like you, my boy. It isn't altogether your fault if you are easy-going. I should have been firmer with both your mother and you, in time. You're how old?"

"Twenty-two, father."

"Young enough and old enough for a fresh start. Where do you think you'll go?"

"South America, father."

"Good. We'll give that out to the curious." He lifted his brows. "You're not going to burden yourself with your current infatuation? All right, don't answer. You're on your own, and I have no longer the privilege to offer my guidance. I'll bid you good-bye in the morning."

"And Max?"

"Had to go back to his academy today. I—I'll explain."

A WEEK later, Franz, already become François Debourg officially, was in Paris with his fiancée. There was time to look around for an opening in South America, as he had a large sum in British currency, which he cautiously placed, with the girl's jewelry, in a bank vault. As soon as he could know his exact destination, he would deposit it to open bank credits.

At the end of another week, his fiancée received a telegram from a girl friend, with whom she had teamed in a dancing act a few months before. She was quite ill, in Ostend, Belgium. Mariquita was heroic. She would not disturb François in his search for a South American opportunity. She would return in four days, surely. Could she have ten thousand francs, to meet emergencies? She could. And she left.

There was a postal card from Ostend: *All well.*

Four days passed, a week, two weeks. François Debourg sent telegrams to various hotels—the number where his fiancée would stop was limited. They were returned. He grew worried, very worried. His funds in the hotel safe grew low. He decided to go to Ostend, and to supply himself with money, went to the bank. Naturally, the jewels left by Mariquita were gone. What was more startling, the sheafs of pound-notes had vanished.

Debourg sped to Ostend, on borrowed money. He had made a few friends and had some old acquaintances in town. His credit was worth a touch of one or two thousand francs per friend. The telegram had been a fake, he learned. The girl friend was there, working, but she had not seen Mariquita!

Debourg hurled back to Paris on the next express. His darling had been murdered, decoyed by a false telegram. She had been intercepted by some gang, after leaving him on the platform in Paris, forced back to the city, compelled to turn over the money. He went to the police and told his sad story. It seemed to him that from the start the Surété agents did not appear to share his worry. They took the names down, asked him to call again in forty-eight hours. By that time, they would have reassuring news, they were certain.

They were right. They had traced Mariquita from Ostend, where she had stopped between trains to send the postal card, to Calais, where she had taken a train to Paris. From Paris, she had gone to Genoa. There, she had boarded a steamer for Brazil. If Monsieur Debourg had come two days earlier, they could have cabled Dakar, French Territory, where the steamer had stopped, and she would have been detained.

"Was she alone or accompanied?" Debourg asked.

"Accompanied, by a gentleman." The official smiled faintly. "I do not believe she is under compulsion, however. The gentleman has been known to her for four years, and to us for even longer. What was the amount?" He whistled at the sum. "Nice nest-egg! Do you wish to sign a complaint? I must warn you that as you had introduced her at the bank, as she had keys and pass-word, you will have to establish proof that the

money actually belonged to you."

"I'll think it over, *monsieur*."

"An expensive lesson, but perhaps worth the money at your age."

Debourg did not dare to wire his father. He knew that he would not be safe from revenge even in Paris, with the trail still fresh. It would reveal his new name, invalidate his courtesy passport. He tried to find work.

France had a law preventing aliens from occupying certain positions. There were left vague jobs, guide, peddler of trinkets and cards. He could also, he was informed, find agricultural employment in certain sections of France. But the Italian and Polish competition was tough. He sold shoes, suits, hats, trunks, fountain-pen, then shirts and underwear. Friends and acquaintances grew a bit embarrassed when they met him, shook hands, pressed a small bill in his hand and walked away rapidly. Before long, they dodged him.

His last pair of shoes took water, his last shirt was in rags, when he took them off to pass the medical examination for the Legion. He would have wept if he had been rejected. But the doctors nodded, waved him on: "Good for service. All right. Next."

DEBOURG was a true Legionnaire, without name, without home, without a sweetheart. A real *heimatlos*, as the men around him termed it. He had signed up to serve the French Republic for a dish of stew twice a day and a few cents a month. He became one more silhouette in khaki meandering long the boulevard de la Republique in Sidi-bel-Abbes, between the barracks and the Negro village.

Then his luck turned. A stout major stopped before the training company, looked along the line. "Eh, there, the tall chap, what's your name?"

"Debourg, *mon commandant*, François Debourg."

"You speak French? Good. Report at the office at five."

He was not wanted for a dangerous mission. His clean-cut silhouette, light complexion and blond hair merely made him a suitable man to don number one uniform — with red epaulettes — and hand out programs at a charity affair given by the major's wife. Several people, including ladies, complimented the major on his choice, said the Legionnaire had "cultured ways and an interesting, sad face."

"Can you write French?" the major asked him the next day. "You can! Fine, fine. Report to the corporals' training squad tomorrow morning."

By the end of the year, he was a sergeant. After four years, he took examinations for Saint-Maixent School. He was accepted, returned a naturalized Frenchman and a second lieutenant. Shorter men, with less handsome faces, with more intelligence, more endurance, possibly better qualities for leadership, continued in the ranks.

He considered that he had been born on the day of his enlistment, had pushed from him all memories of the past. His soul had healed, for moral wounds close in time, as do physical wounds. From time to time, he would dream of the mountains, of his friends, of the man's face as he had propped him against the wall. It annoyed him that he would never know whether he had fallen of himself or not. But very soon after waking, he would forget.

When the war broke out, in September, 1939, he was promoted to full lieutenant. And sent to the Sahara, to command an outpost. Not that he was not trusted. His French was perfect, and those who did not know his past well considered him a Frenchman. He thought of himself as such. And when a regiment was organized to go to France as reinforcement, he put his name on the list voluntarily. He was ready to fight the Germans, even if there were Austrians with them.

At Brest, he had learned his destination: Norway.

He felt, as did many officers who knew their trade, that the Germans would attack France in the spring. And his heart tightened as he looked back at the rocky coast. He felt that he was deserting.

His brief sojourn in Liverpool brought startling revelations. Britain did not appear as well-prepared for war now as

Germany had in 1934! There was a casualness, and easy-going manner that appalled him. France had been lax enough. But the British appeared to consider this struggle like one of their numerous colonial expeditions.

Then he forgot his premonitions of evil in admiration for the efficiency of their fleet. The transports reached the Lofoten Islands, then Norway itself. A few days later, Lieutenant François Debourg was leading his international section against Austrian sharpshooters.

CHAPTER V

THE MYSTERIOUS SWEDE

THE Foreign Legion was ordered out of Bjerkvik.

They were glad to leave. The village was in ruins. The fierce bombardment by the British warships preceding the actual landing of troops had set numerous fires, blown up German munition dumps. After that, several times each day, the Nazi bombers had flown over, to rain explosives. Their missiles had struck vital spots with amazing accuracy. Motor trucks parked under camouflage were destroyed, the Legion's post of commandment was blown up, several officers killed. In the port, the wharf, many launches and boats, had been blasted to kindling.

The Polish troops had been taken to Ankeness in lighters, on the southern shore of Bjessfjord, across from Narvik. On the day of attack, they were to cross toward Fagerness and press westward. The Legion, other French troops and Norwegian battalions were to occupy the Ojord Peninsula, across the Rombaken Fjord and north of Narvik, to attack from that side.

Debourg was impressed by the Norwegian troopers. They were big, strong fellows, seemed fearless, and their officers appeared to know their trade. The majority had done frontier duty along the Finnish border for months, and they were tempered for a hard campaign. But they lacked modern equipment, which was normal in a small army meant for defense and not aggression. Like most of the Nazis' foes, they were improvising against a perfectly prepared war machine.

A Legion motorcycle detachment had carried a scouting trip all the way down the Ojord Peninsula, found it almost clear of the enemy. The battalions marched south, escorted by a few French tanks, which the fleet had contrived to land. But they were not formidable here, for the roads were poor and where they no longer were buried in snow, they were flaccid stretches of mud.

There was very little fighting on the way. The scattered German patrols in that area retreated swiftly eastward, keeping contact. At rare intervals, the chatter of an automatic rifle, the bursting of a grenade, broke the silence. Debourg and his men did not participate in those skirmishes, for the screen of scouts on skis, Legionnaires also, was enough to brush back the Nazi stragglers. The hike was pleasant to his men, many of whom had been born in mountainous regions. They sang as they marched over hills and through valleys, with spring bringing out the green leaves, arguing over the names of the trees: spruce, birches, pines.

The officers were somewhat depressed. They did not doubt that they would achieve their mission here, and retake Narvik. But they all sensed, like Berrier, that the important game was being played in France, without them. They were active officers, men interested in their profession, and many of them realized what the home forces would be up against. Most of them had read books by de Gaulle, by Faure, by others, concerning the use of tanks and aviation. So most of them understood very well that the French Army was fifteen years behind the times.

The whole peninsula was occupied rapidly, garrisons established at Ojord, on the Rombaken Fjord across from Narvik, and at Seynes, on the shore of Herjangs Fjord. The high command then decided that it was necessary to control the shore of the Rombaken at least as far as the Storelven Stream, to prevent a junction of the German forces driven out of Bjerkvik and Elvegaard

with those who were holding the port.

This involved, as Mademoiselle Tholfson, who had never attended military school, had predicted, the occupation of the fjord port of Lilleberg.

To achieve this, it was planned to have the Legion advance overland, while the British Fleet brought the Alpine *Chasseurs* through the fjord in boats. A sharp combat was expected, but the Nazis left without accepting the fight. They were efficient soldiers, who knew when to fight to the last man and when to avoid a few useless casualties. The ski-scouts of the Legion surged from the fringe of woods, went down the slope and explored the town, sent a detachment to remove mines from the wharf. The other units of the corps held the upper part of the ground.

At the same time, from the British ships came strings of boats, which poured out companies of Alpine *Chasseurs* upon the wharf. These marched up, to reach the defense positions to the northeast. Debourg and his men watched the young soldiers in silence as they filed by wearily.

The poor fellows had been victims of a blunder. A few days ago, they had been marched recklessly into the mountains behind Bjerkvik, in the circling movement to force the Nazis from the village. They had run into fierce resistance by Austrian mountaineers, installed in comfortable positions. For many hours, they had floundered in the deep snow, helplessly, lacking food, supplies and at the last, ammunition. They had been harried by a fierce aviation. No wonder they did not look spirited. Debourg wondered if the damn fools who had sent those conscripted kids to die in snowdrifts in a foreign land did not deserve execution.

They were still so weakened that their chiefs had accepted the help of Norwegian civilian volunteers, to carry their baggage. In contrast with the stocky little soldiers from France, the northerners appeared like giants. They came up the incline, handling the heavy loads easily, grinning, laughing, whistling.

THEY were granted a halt to rest as they passed Debourg's section. Immediately, the two parties drew together, curiously. There was much amusement because one of the Norwegians had served in the Legion, and one of the Legionnaires was a Norwegian. There was a concert of talk, in many languages, broken German dominating, with occasional exclamations in Arabic. Naturally, Debourg shook hands with the ex-Legionnaire, and assured him he recalled his face.

"Depot company at Taza, wasn't it?"

"Sure. In '35. You were a sergeant in the Mounted."

The inevitable exchange of provisions

and trinkets started. A coat button for a postal card. Cigarettes for a pocket knife. Hard chocolate for a piece of reindeer cheese. The general opinion of the Norwegians was that now they had started to fight, the invaders would soon be kicked out.

Near the end of the line, seated on the heavy case he had been carrying was a large man, one of the biggest in the lot. He was speaking with a couple of war-time volunteers, and as Debourg drew near, he recognized good German, with a trace of softness. The man was big, muscular, dressed in rough clothing, with huge, thick-soled boots laced over heavy socks. He was blond. Described in words, he would have resembled any of the others, the Norwegians.

Yet his ruddy complexion, the bones of his face, even the color of his hair, were somehow different. His chin, the line of his nose, the shape of his mouth, were finer, tenser. And his eyes were of an odd blue here, darker, grayer than the porcelain blue of the natives'. He wore a yellow scarf knotted snugly under his hard chin. He looked up at Debourg, and appeared startled for a moment.

"Officer?" he said, standing up.

His appearance then made Debourg doubt his first impression. The man was rather awkward, lumbering, with his hanging arms and stooped shoulders. And his expression of respect made him appear a bit stupid. He removed the heavy cap, revealing a thick thatch of hair evidently untouched by a comb in some time.

"You speak excellent German. Norwegian?"

"No, Lieutenant. I'm a Swede."

"A neutral. Why don't you go home?"

"How can I? Traffic is stopped on the railway." The man fumbled in his fur-lined jacket, brought out a paper. "At Ojord, the French officer said it was all right for me to help, too. He stamped my booklet."

Debourg waved the paper aside. "I'm not a police official. It's just that I thought I had seen you before."

"I thought so, too, sir." The man shifted his feet, grinned sheepishly. "If you won't be offended, sir—you look like my uncle. And I look like him, too." His accent in German was thicker than Debourg had thought at first. "That could be, you know, because we have French in the family. My grandfather's father on my mother's side. He came with Bernadotte. My grandfather was a crown councilor. I'm glad to help."

"Where did you learn your German?"

"In school, sir. Then I worked for a while on ships running to Hamburg."

He started, as the halt was ended and one of the leaders was shouting at him to hurry. He mumbled a vague good-bye, leaned down and lifted the case. He got it on his shoulder in two heaves, one to his knee, the next to position. Then Debourg noted another difference: his hands.

One did not need to have studied Lombroso to know they were not the hands of a laborer by trade. The nails were broken, dirty, the skin rough. But the fingers were long, tapering, somehow delicate. A glance at the hands of the man following, thick-palmed, beefy, with spatulate fingertips, confirmed his opinion. Moreover, the fellow had asked him at first if he were an officer, then had addressed him by his correct rank. But did that mean much? In several European armies, two bits of braid meant a full lieutenant.

"The devil with it," Debourg mused. "I would know my own brother. Sure, I knew him. No, I'd be absolutely sure. This chap's taller than I am, at least as broad. Max is shorter by two inches, lighter by twenty pounds. Is? No, was—he was eighteen and must have grown.

"Doesn't carry himself like a soldier, either. But he would be smart enough to watch for that. And he was the first to remark on the resemblance. Max was intelligent, but never that quick-witted to tackle the really suspicious angle first and cover it. In any case, suppose it was Max, what could I do? Denounce him and have him shot before my eyes? Warn him, tell him to lay off?"

A sergeant stepped up to him.

"Will you see if the tracing for the shelter trench is all right, Lieutenant? The men are ready to start work."

"Coming."

THE sap was laid out correctly. Debourg nodded and the men set to digging. Not far away was the fringe of a wood, and under the trees working parties from another company were piling supplies, cases of cartridges, crates of artillery shells, of grenades. Other gangs were filling sacks with earth, to use as a cover later.

Debourg turned away, to look over the town, across the gleaming surface of Rombaken Fjord, toward the mountain looming behind Narvik, the mountain he would have to climb under fire before long.

There was a continual thundering of guns, for a British cruiser, probably H.M.S. *Effingham*, and two destroyers were hurling shells at that mountain. They were aiming at the openings of the railway tunnels. From time to time, smoke would puff from the opposite ends, marking a lucky hit. A concealed German battery, five-point-nines, returned these attentions, kicking up spouts around the vessels. That fire was deliberate, it was plain that the Nazis did not wish to waste much ammunition. They kept the ships moving, to disturb their fire control, and that was about all.

"I would have been sure—" Debourg started to murmur again.

Then the warning bugle sounded in the town, the cruiser shrieked in alarm. There was a heavy pulsation in the sky, the bombers were coming. The men dropped their tools and looked from the shallow ditch they had sketched along the ground to their lieutenant. What were they supposed to do? Stick at it?

"Get into that wood and scatter," Debourg ordered.

Distant explosions thudded from the direction of Bjerkvik. That luckless village was being wrecked again. Then anti-aircraft guns of the destroyers on Herjangs Fjord started to bang. Then the bombers slid into view over the hills of Ojord Peninsula. There were many of them, formation after formation, and more kept oozing out of the blue. The Germans were making a strong demonstration, possibly because they were sore at the occupation of Lilleberg.

The droning swarms divided, somewhere above Ojord, dislocating for separate attacks. Every occupied spot was due for a good bombing, that was evident. There were two British Gladiators on patrol, and they headed recklessly for the newcomers. Several small machines plunged out of the sky to meet them. The others came on.

Some swooped very low over the ships, spattering the fjord with geysers. The sky was filling with little fleecy clouds from the bursting shells.

Down slope, the town had emptied of human life. There was good shelter in the vault of the electric plant. Near the wharf, two anti-aircraft guns on trucks, manned by Frenchmen, coughed and coughed, the crews darting about like ants. The bombs started to fall upon Lilleberg. Houses went up in dirty clouds of mud and smoke.

Far above, other planes passed, headed for Narvik. They flew above the town, screened from view by its circle of hillocks, and beneath them bloomed dozens of colored spots, white, red, green, floating like petals before the wind: parachutes.

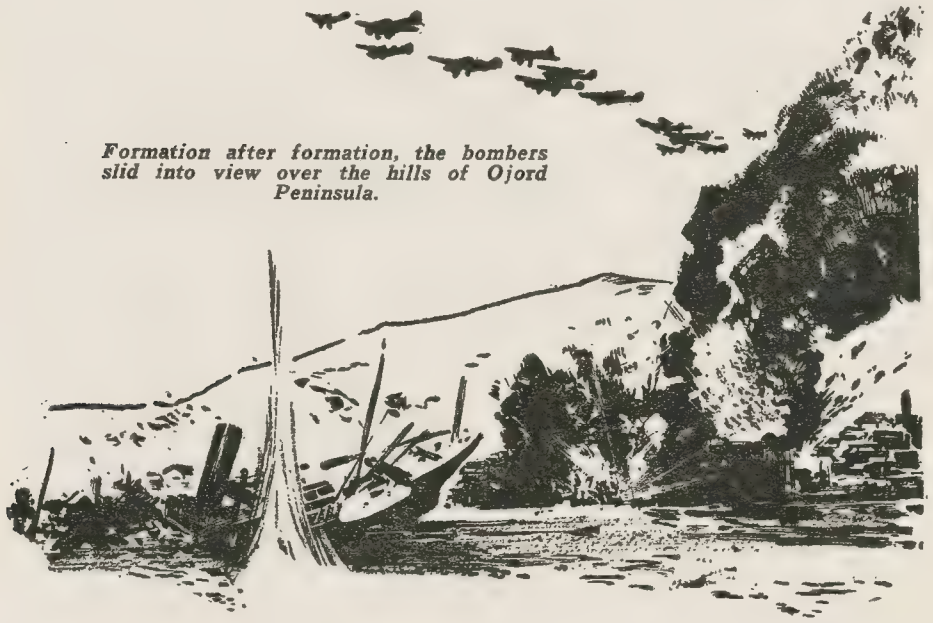
Supplies and munitions were reaching the defenders of Narvik. Debourg thought of the immense effect upon the Germans' morale this would have. They were isolated, surrounded, that was true, but their own had not forgotten them. They were masters of the air. Where did all those machines come from? Occupied Norway, hundreds of miles to the south, or, as was rumored, from secret militarized fields in neutral Sweden?

A string of small bombs, incendiaries, fell along the shore, fused into flame. A storehouse started to burn, the dark smoke coiling upward greasily. Men appeared to control the fires.

Four of the machines then circled above the battered town, raking the wide streets with machine guns and small shells. They paid as little attention to the anti-aircraft guns as if they had been shooting blanks. Those pilots showed a fine, aggressive spirit, Debourg thought, professionally. Then a plane dived into the fjord, exploded.

"They got one, they got one!" Zantapar screamed, dancing about.

He possibly had been waiting a long time for such a sight. One of the machines headed for the wood in which the section was sheltered. Streams of tracer bullets crackled through the branches, smoked in the trunks. Men threw themselves on the ground, hands over their faces, expecting the plane to crash upon them. But when it was so near that men could be discerned through the canopied



Formation after formation, the bombers slid into view over the hills of Ojord Peninsula.

nose, it zoomed upward, skimming the tops of the trees, lifted higher, banked and was gone.

The others did not linger long. They vanished eastward. But they had marked their brief visit plainly on the ground. Flames were rising in many places, some of them as remote as the far bank of Herjangs Fjord, several miles off. Debourg blew his whistle, assembled his section. The men scattered again, to search for two who were missing.

They found them, both dead, shattered by the heavy caliber bullets. One was a Spaniard, the other an old Legionnaire, once famous for his drunken sprees in Morocco.

"We'll attend to them soon. Get to work. They'll be back—"

THE battalion commander, Major Royer, came up on inspection. He was a very big man, taller and broader than Debourg, over forty and tending to round in the middle. He stopped before the two mutilated bodies, and touched the brim of his helmet with his hand.

"Two more! Seven were blown to hell out of one combat group in the 5th Company. Their mates are so rattled they'll be useless for a week." He had drawn Debourg aside, where the men could not hear. "It's a damn crime to ask our men to stand for this without any air protection. But bawl them out a bit, eh? Legionnaires and that sort of business. You'll be asked to help prepare gun pits for a battery of Colonial Artillery. See if you can't get help from the Norwegians over there, too. Their officers can't understand my German, or something. I'll make a bet that none of us get out of this dump with a whole skin. Just the same, we'll take Narvik. That's what we're here for." He turned away.

Debourg walked back slowly. He looked at Zantapar, noticed his reddened eyes. The Spaniard shrugged, as if annoyed at his softness, then indicated the dead man. "My friend. Always. We were in the *Assaltos* together. At Cuatro Campos, at Goya, at Getafe, everywhere." He listed his battles as if the whole world must know of them. He paused as if startled by a sudden thought, which he voiced: "More than a brother."

Those few words smote Debourg like a slap in the face.

Yes, sometimes the kinship of combat welded men better than blood. The word duty had been worn by over-use, but this reminded the officer that the rules of duty were the simmering down of realities. These Legionnaires were his real brethren, his kin. Right or wrong, he must inform someone of his suspicions.

He wrote rapidly: *Suggest checking up on tall Swede with civilian porters. Do not know his name, but he resembles me in general description. Lt. D.*

He tore the leaf from his notebook, handed it to a Legionnaire to take to Lieutenant Berrier, at the Battalion P. C. He wanted to recall him before he had gone three steps. But he did not. Information to the enemy that led to the killing of men must be stopped. He would not have hesitated to sacrifice

his own life, nor even that of his brother, had this brother served on his side. Why spare an enemy?

And he probably was leaping at conclusions. The man must speak perfect Swedish to deceive people so near Sweden. But Max might be able to speak thus. He had spoken Swedish as a small boy, and now Debourg recalled that he had gone to Stockholm on vacations several times as a youth.

At six o'clock, he went to the house used for the officers' mess. Berrier shrugged at his inquiring glance, and led him away as soon as the frugal meal was over. "You're seeing things, old man. The man's a moron, not a spy. I kept him here on a job so you could talk to him. His German's execrable."

The suspect was nailing small planks over the window frames in the P. C. He answered the description as to size, but he had a round, soft, stupid face, tiny eyes, and his hands were so big that the big hammer looked like a toy.

"Wrong guy," Debourg protested, in French. "I wrote you he looked like me. Thanks."

"He does, in a vague way. And he was the only Swede there."

"Listen, there was another. Played dumb, but was intelligent. Handsome egg, dark blue eyes, with small hands for his size. Sort of distinguished—"

"Just like you—" Berrier choked with laughter. "If the strain becomes too great, have me called and I'll pat your back for you! But I have an idea who you mean now. Come on, it's only a couple of hundred meters uptown."

They dodged debris and holes for a short distance, came to a house rather more pretentious than others, painted white. The windows had been blown in, a few tiles knocked off the roof. But it was inhabited, for someone was playing a piano inside, men were singing, laughing.

"What's this?"

"Shame on you," Berrier laughed. "Mademoiselle Odette lives here. Oh, right, you don't know her first name. Odette Tholfson, your international spy. You'll find a happy girl in there, for her fiancé has arrived. He enrolled with the civilian volunteers at Ballangen, to get up here. True love, you know."

THEY entered the main room, a sort of lobby around the steep stairway leading to an upper floor. There were four French officers present, one a Legionnaire. Mademoiselle Tholfson presided, gracious and smiling. The Swede was playing the upright piano. He rose to be introduced, smiled sheepishly as he recognized Debourg. "Sorry, you know. I didn't quite know what my situation would be if—"

"He was afraid we'd ship him right back if he didn't work," Berrier explained. "He did not then know what influence his fiancée had over the Intelligence Service. Monsieur Runeding, Lieutenant Debourg. I say, you do look alike—"

"I mistook Lieutenant Debourg for you, Cornelius," Mademoiselle Odette said.

"And this is the cousin to whom you speak German, mademoiselle?"

"I—well, I said the first thing that came into my head—and my Swedish is worse than my German."

"Then it could still be very good. As good, for instance, as Monsieur Runeding's French, which is excellent." Debourg surrendered his helmet to his colleague of the Legion, who placed it on Runeding's head, stepping back to compare.

"Sure, there's a resemblance. Coloring's different—"

"Six years of Africa," Debourg suggested.

The fellow looked more like Max than ever, now that he was wearing a well-fitting tweed jacket, his hair combed and smoothed.

A squat, yellowish old woman, almost a dwarf, appeared from a side door, bringing a tray loaded with small glasses. Mademoiselle Odette spoke to her in a language which Debourg could not understand at all. She explained that it was a sort of hybrid of Norwegian and Lappish.

"Midway between vodka and anisette, isn't it?" Berrier took Debourg aside. Runeding had resumed playing. "The

old dame's the maid and chaperon. The people who own the place, Tholfson's manager and his wife, hopped it to Sweden while the Germans were here. I guess the big lad, who'll stay here, doesn't mind a bit. You were right, he was a phoney, if not the way you thought. Nice playing. Sounds familiar. Know it?"

"Something from *La Tzarine*. You remember—*j'ai vu des beautés divines* and so on. Old stuff. You'll find me persistent, Berrier. But who is he?"

"Oh, the devil. We should swap jobs. He was here before the Germans ever thought of coming—in 1936. The mayor knows him, he's in the Stockholm directory, works for a chartering company. Came back each year for a few weeks. All right, he was evasive this morning. But why should he spill his business to the first officer he happens to speak with? Where do you think you saw him before?"

"I can't recall clearly, I'm not sure."

"All right. The Norwegians are kicking already at the way we check up on civilians, we're having arguments as to where to evacuate them and why. All we need is to stick this bird in the can and have the Swedes on our necks—"

"I'd prefer that to bombs."

"I dare say. I'll keep an eye on him."

Runeding was playing the piano, listening to a Frenchman who leaned over him. Suddenly, he started a famous old waltz. Debourg looked over quickly, recognizing a tune popular in Vienna fifteen years before. The Frenchman started to laugh, spoke to his comrades, who rocked with amusement.

Runeding ceased playing, rose and came toward Debourg.

"Before your friends give me away, I have a confession. I said it was extraordinary for a Frenchman to speak German as you do. Like an Austrian. And he suggested that I should startle you with the song. Now, I find you are Austrian by birth. I spent the most delightful weeks of my life in Vienna—" Here he caught himself, to see if Mademoiselle Odette had overheard. "In '29 and '32. I was there last summer, but it is no longer the same. The war was already in the air."

Debourg answered at random. He was struggling with the same infuriating doubts. Was this Max, or not? It was his voice, the gestures were his. But Max had been a rather snobbish little brute, a snob in many ways, and this man was warm, cordial, a good mixer. Could a man assume social charm like a false beard?

The next two hours did not clear up his confusion. He played the piano himself, sang. Mademoiselle Odette performed, rather poorly. She was affected in simple ballads while her voice was not suited to operatic selections. The Lapp woman circulated with the drinks and with tidbits that tasted either fishy, salty or smoky. Considering that the conversations, the songs, were carried on to the rumble of naval guns, the evening was pleasant enough.

The officers left one by one, called by their routine, and Debourg took leave, escorted Berrier part of the way to the port. When their paths forked, he shook hands.

Pepsi-Cola is made only by Pepsi-Cola Company, Long Island City, N. Y. Bottled locally by authorized bottlers.

"Well, good day. Or good night. It's after nine."

"Rather gives one the pip, that sun—" Berrier indicated the ruddy reflection in the fjord. "Well, sleep on both ears, old chap. I'll bet Cornelius is thinking more of how soundly a Lapp woman sleeps than of anything connected with the Nazis."

CHAPTER VI

A MOI, LA LÉGION!

SOME of the Legionnaires were asleep. Others were mending garments or boots, cleaning weapons. Old Steuwer, who had a steady hand with a brush, was lettering the horizontal branch of a wooden cross from a paper held by Zantapar. A couple of miles away, the four-point-sevens of the *Fame* darted tongues of orange flame into the sky. British planes were cruising about.

In the wood, two seventy-fives were lined up, camouflaged with green netting. The lieutenant was a Colonial Artilleryman, had served in Algeria and Syria, as had Debourg. They shared a bottle of wine and a tin of biscuits. The gunner pointed out landmarks.

"Four thousand four hundred—four thousand six—I can hit them as if I was delivering by hand. If their damn planes don't blast us to hell first. Their artillery's good, too. And they must have everything plotted. They get accurate information. That's plain as the nose on your face, they're tipped off, almost minute by minute, to everything we do. The other day, my battery's sent in before Elvegaard, and they're dropping junk on us before we've fired a shot. With those quick-firers of theirs. Like machine guns. We had two guns knocked out and seventeen guys on the ground inside five minutes. We left in a hell of a hurry."

It was the same all over again. The Germans had precise information; we guessed. The Intelligence people, even with the assistance of the willing but untrained Norwegian police, milled about trying to comb out spies, evacuate civilians. Greater ruthlessness would have been more humane in the long run, the complete emptying of the combat areas. But the natives were victims, for the most part, and Berrier had said correctly that one had to think twice before forcing civilians of a friendly nation onto ships that might be sunk by air bombs.

"Any news from France?" Debourg asked.

"If there is, it isn't good, as it's not communicated to the troops. Two nights ago, near Elvegaard, we could hear the Boches singing from the advanced posts. It's not what's happening here that makes them sing."

Debourg walked away, toward the hut prepared for him, for he usually slept near his men.

Without definite plans, he walked down the hill path toward the town. He had realized that he would not sleep until he knew. The destroyers were practicing against the Narvik defenses. The tunnels' mouths seemed an irresistible lure to naval gunners.

"I'll see the fellow alone. There must be some way of making sure." He tried to remember a sign of identification, a visible scar, the proverbial "mole below the shoulder blade" of old romances. "If we'd been like most brothers, I would know. But even before I left, he was a stranger to me. Why, the last time I saw him undressed was that night in Monte Carlo, when the manager woke us up about mother. He can't have been more than twelve. And I'd hardly take notice of him when we happened to be home together. Well, I'll say I came to chat about Vienna, and I'll soon trip him. If he knows Austria too well—"

There was the house. There was no need to creep up, to muffle one's steps, the guns took care of that noise! He tried pushing what appeared like a bell-button, nothing happened. He tested the door handle, and it turned. Inside, his steps sounded on the floor distinctly, but no one came. Why not? He smiled. Of course, despite this ghostly twilight, it was night, and people had turned in. And those who overcame the din outside enough to sleep would not be disturbed easily.

He looked around the living-room,

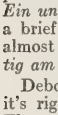
hesitating as to what to do next. He crossed the other room, probably used for a dining salon. The owners must be prosperous, the furniture was handsome and modern. There was a compact, neat white kitchen, provided both with a small electric stove and an alcohol heater.

A shining handle of brass set in a hollow in the floor drew his eyes.

"Trap-door. Cellar, eh? Not much of an air raid shelter, a bomb would go right through this house. Still, maybe they sleep down there, because of the noise—" He lifted the trap a foot, was about to drop it again, when he heard a voice, counting in German.

"Forty-eight, yes, forty-eight. Sixty-two, yes, sixty-two. Twenty-one, yes, twenty-one. Twenty-one A and K, twenty-one A and K." The voice tolled slowly, monotonously, repeating each time at least once. Then there was impatience in the tone: *"Ja, Lilleberg, ja! Ein und zwanzig A und K."* There was a brief pause, ended by a loud phrase, almost an angry shout: *"Ja, ja, ist richtig am Waldrand, ja!"*

Debourg froze in place. "Yes, yes, it's right on the fringe of the wood." The numbers must be map indications agreed upon, A and K probably meant artillery and munitions. He allowed the trap to settle in place.



NO matter who was down below, his brother or someone else who resembled him, Berrier must be informed. He would locate the telephone or the radio transmitter, attend to its owner. What was amazing was the cool insolence of the spy, sending in information from an unguarded house!

He started to leave, but had no time. The trap door opened behind him, and a voice asked in German, "Are you there, darling? Who's moving—" and Monsieur Runeding entered the middle room, saw Debourg before him, holding a pistol. He smiled, spoke.

"Leave that alone, Franz! I expected you to come alone, even sooner. Glad to see you."

He came forward eagerly, hands extended, clasped the older man about the shoulders. Debourg shifted the pistol to his left hand. Max slapped him on the back.

"Old Franz! You gave me a start, up there, this morning. I knew you'd ended up in the Legion, and knew some Legionnaires were here. But I didn't believe it possible that—and well, an officer, decorated. Let's see, Legion of Honor, Military Medal, Colonial Cross, medals, medals! Here I was thinking you were one of the slaves, and you're one of the whips! Compliments, yes! But sit down. Cigars in that box on the small table—

"Yes, I knew where you were. You remember Luisa, fat lulu? She married a Dutchman and went to Morocco on her honeymoon. Swore she had seen you, plain as day, in some lonesome hole, forget which, in 1936—"

"Midelt. Tourist buses stop there for lunch."

Max lighted a cigar.

"Well, it's over for you, Franz, exile, loneliness. Your experience will count with us, you know Morocco. They appreciate soldiers among us, and people who know. Perhaps not a commission immediately, but a position of trust. Forgiven, forgotten—" He walked about, talking rapidly. "Saw that you spotted me at once, this morning. Nasty moment, didn't quite know what you'd do. Then nothing happened, and when you came in with the fat lad, I knew it would be all right. Tried to tell you with that old song. Remember how they played it on the lake boat, out of Vevey? The time I was seasick on a lake? I'll see that you start off right—"

"Max"—the name came from Debourg with an effort—"it's not possible, Max."

"Why? Oh, that old trouble? The Old Man told me about it, very seriously, when I reached twenty-one. I was old enough to know the shame of the family. Made me laugh. I was already in the party then. Went to Munich, investigated. They had never been sure it was you. When they found the fellow squatted against the wall—"

"What?"

"I quote from the police report. What's the matter?"

"He was squatting. You wouldn't

understand—" Debourg laughed nervously. "Go on."

"They naturally checked all hotels, found you'd gone, knew you'd had rows with the fellow. Questioned Vienna by routine. Then further investigation showed forty, fifty other people might have had reason to kill him. Cheap lout, you know. Used his uniform to bully people, women, took money for bribes. Closed the case then." Max snapped his fingers. "I have influence too."

"I'm staying where I am, Max."

"Why be a fool? The French are finished. We shall be in Paris in another month, in London by September. Why tie up with a rotten, doomed lot? You don't know what Germany will accomplish in the world. When it has removed obstacles from its path—"

"Like father."

"You're hardly the one to reproach me, Franz. Hardly!"

"You're serving the people who killed him."

"He killed himself, really. He tried to ride two horses and fell between. He was growing old and religious. While he pretended to work for the party, he contributed half of his money to some rotten newspaper working against it. What could we do? There was no time to distinguish between senility and treason. What do you think you're doing with that pistol, Franz?"

"I'll tell you. You're my brother—"

"I think you'll grant I am ready to treat you like mine."

"You're my brother, and I don't want your blood on my hands. I should turn you over to be shot. That's compromising, to make you a counter-offer. But I am not like you, Max." Debourg started to perspire. "My chiefs, my men, would think me a coward, a traitor. I may tell them, later. But now you're going to give me your word that you'll chuck this business and leave. I'll even consent to your serving in uniform."

"Don't make me laugh, Franz. I might break my word."

"I'll chance that. Your word?"

"Nonsense."

"Then I'll turn you over to the French."

"Do so." Max laughed easily. "That was the risk from the start. But why not have it over and shoot me? You can't? I wouldn't hesitate if the roles were reversed. Why the difference? You know my death won't make any difference in the ultimate outcome, and you won't kill for a dead cause. Neither of us is afraid of death, if I can judge from those French trinkets, but I'm not afraid to kill. While you're undecided, weigh the situation! You won't shoot, so put it away, please. That's better."

DEBOURG sank on the piano stool, lowered the gun. Max was right, he could not shoot.

"Franz, did you shoot that woman who made a fool of you?"

"No."

"I knew it. Father turned soft for a while, and investigated. You didn't shoot her, and you won't shoot me. You see, Franzeli, I know you well. I even know that you will turn me over. But I am less afraid than you are. By the way"—he indicated the ceiling—"don't bother her. She knew nothing. I might marry her. Might have married her, I mean. But I know that you can show resolution, once that weak will is set. There was, for instance, that man in Munich."

Debourg shook himself wearily.

"You refuse to give your word. We better get going."

His mouth was dry, he was reluctant. But he thought of his men, of the artillery lieutenant and his crews, *right on the fringe of the wood.* The next air raid would locate them, if nothing was done. And who knew when the bombers would appear next, in this endless day?

"See here, Franz, a last—" Max broke off, as light steps came down the stairs. "All right, I'll come. But try to avoid a scene. Don't tell her, she'll learn soon enough."

Mademoiselle Odette appeared, a vision in sleek orange silks. She was very soft and charming—until she saw the gun in Debourg's hand. She was so startled that she did not see Max's gesture of warning, looked toward the kitchen. "He's seen—"

There was a short silence, then Max laughed sincerely.

"I thought better of you, darling. It may be a small detail, but I think you got yourself in a sad mess. However, he has no witness. By the way, without reproach, I had asked you to remain here to watch."

"I went up to—"

"We've been talking here twenty minutes, darling. My brother and I. By the way, meet my brother, the Legionnaire. We've been separated for a long time, and we are about to part for even longer. Franz, may I have a drink? Darling, please—get the whiskey, not that horrible belly-wash."

"Is it necessary?" Debourg asked, holding back the girl with a gesture.

"I should say! Franz, let her go, please. I give you my word that there is no pistol there, and I'm sure Odette is too dainty to use a carving knife—at this range. Nothing but pots and pans, and whiskey. The one British product I like."

Debourg nodded. But he stepped aside four or five yards, to command both the living-room where Max stood and the kitchen. With a gun in his hand, what had he to fear?

Odette left the door open, unlocked a cupboard, brought out bottles. She called out impatiently: "I don't see the whiskey, darling. Where did we leave it?"

"Upper cupboard, out of reach of the woman, I think. I'll—" He stopped short as Debourg swung the pistol toward him. "All right, Franz, I'll be—"

The Legionnaire caught a glimpse of Odette's gesture, because her loose orange sleeve flashed, but he could not quite avoid the heavy iron pot hurled at his head. Nothing but pots and pans—and she had taken the hint. The blow was deadened by his helmet, but the clang deafened him, he reeled back. The next instant, Max punched him in the stomach, then on the jaw, dazing him. Debourg was struggling against the pair.

"Hold him! Don't scratch him, hold him—I've got to—"

Max was trying to get hold of the gun, and Debourg knew he would use it. He dropped the weapon, kicked it away with his heel. His helmet had fallen off, and while Odette hung on to his arms, brother Max was earnestly trying to brain him with swings of the iron pot! Oh, the young devil had told the truth, he was not one to hesitate because of blood or kinship.

But in this case, the non-Nazi was better prepared for the emergency. In the years between his enlistment and his commission, Debourg had attended a good rough-and-tumble school, permanently in session among Legionnaires at play. He tripped Max deftly, sent him into a table, which crashed. When he leaped to the attack again, the officer was ready, his foot caught him below the ribs.

Instinctively, Debourg uttered the traditional yelp: *"A moi, la légion!"*

MAX scrambled to his feet, white-faced, panting with pain. He saw that the situation had turned against him, ripped open a window and leaped out. Debourg started after him, but Odette barred his path. She had picked up the gun and was trying to fire. Debourg's arm swung, he slapped her down in a confused whirl of white legs and orange silk.

He stooped to pick up the gun and straightened to catch a solid, meaty impact on his face. The Lapp woman had heard the noise, and had come to the rescue. Debourg found it hard to handle her without roughness, as her head was more than a foot below his chin. Then the room filled with shouting men. Norwegian civilians, angry and powerful, one wearing a yellow police arm-band, a brace of Legionnaires, a *Chasseur,* a mechanic from the tank corps.

To the natives, the meaning of the scene was plain. A foreigner was molesting local women. So that they attacked Debourg, who was supported by the soldiers. By the time order prevailed, after the polyglot explanations, Max could not be found. The combatants shook hands in the wrecked rooms, forgiving bloody noses and black eyes.

Berrier discovered a neat little radio

set in the cellar. It could be branched on the house current or on batteries. Patrols were sent to search every house, from top to bottom, each one escorted by a Norwegian soldier. It seemed impossible that Max would not be discovered.

"Some of the people still swear we're making a mistake, that Runeding's all right," Lieutenant Berrier told Debourg, while they were waiting for reports. "And a few citizens have lodged a complaint against us with their own army command for holding the dame. She swears, naturally, that she knew nothing of what was going on, that she had never even been in the cellar.

"Her maid's so stupid that even when you find someone who can converse with her she can't answer questions. By the way, that was a pretty hard smack you gave our lovely Odette! Some of her teeth are loosened, and the doctor's not at all sure that her face will go back precisely where it used to be, when the swelling goes down."

"She had the gun against my belly."

"I'm not blaming you. She had no business mixing in a row between men. You Austrians have odd family reunions. That quaint custom of greeting each other with an iron pot!" The fat officer grasped Debourg's hand between his own. "Forgive me, old chap, I understand how you must feel. Trying to joke, and making a poor job of it. I'm hoping you won't have to—"

Debourg cleared his throat. "Better get that battery out of the wood. And my section, too, if it can be done."

"That's attended to. Before you blame me for being a sucker, I can show you strict instructions against offending the Norwegians by too great strictness. I trusted those whom they trusted, not knowing how trusting they could be."

Patrol chiefs reported one after another, negatively. They had seen one or two persons who claimed to have noticed Runeding running through the street. But they could not find him.

"One more to hear from," Berrier announced. "By the way, in confidence, we have a report from a prisoner. He says that they have news that Abbeville is taken by the Germans. That means the British and our Northern Corps are in a pocket. And that we are on our own up here and need not wait for reinforcements. We have to take Narvik with the means at hand.

"We can count out the British on land. They have only two companies. The Poles have their hands full at Ankeness. The *Chasseurs* can only be used for demonstrations, the pep's out of them. That leaves it up to the Legion and the Norwegian battalions." He looked at the last sergeant to report. "Well?"

"Nothing, Lieutenant."

"Now, I must make that girl talk. I think I have an idea!"

CHAPTER VII

ATTACK!

"ALL present in the section, Lieutenant."

Debourg nodded and looked at his watch. Eleven fifty-six was the hour.

On the other side of Rombaken Fjord, the midnight sun was tinging the remaining snow along the crests with rose and mauve streaks. The shadows of the hills of the north shore lengthened across the smooth water like menacing wedges of darkness. The storming companies of Foreign Legion and Norwegians were waiting for the signal to start, had grounded arms in the sheltering gloom of the woods above Ojord harbor.

The Legionnaires were cheerful, glad to have action in prospect. The majority had been hanging about, subjected to air bombs, for too long not to appreciate a chance to fire a few shots. There were planes overhead now, but they were British. If they could only keep the sky clear for a few hours, the men said, one would see if the land Nazis were such tough fighters.

The silence was far from complete. There were the planes, and the usual scattered detonations. Nothing to alarm the defenders, to warn them that this was the moment. Then the slender silhouettes of destroyers appeared, nosing into view around the tip of the Nar-

vik Peninsula, followed by a procession of boats, lighters, launches, sent by the British fleet. Some of these boats were heading toward the port of Seynes, out of sight around the hills, where the Second Battalion would embark.

"Stand to."

The men ceased talking, mechanically readjusted belts and straps. They looked very fit, Debourg thought, and appeared bigger than usual, wrapped in the greenish jackets, bulging with cartridge-pouches, sacks, reserve ammunition.

Midnight.

Several British vessels had slid into the fjord quietly, and one of them opened fire, as a signal. This brought about a terrifying chorus, a rolling, unceasing thunder. Naval ordnance, French batteries on Ojord Peninsula, pompoms and machine guns on launches and small boats, all were turned loose at once. And without a second's delay, the concealed batteries of the Nazis returned this fire, their quick-firers mounted on trucks rolled out of the railway tunnels.

The fight for Narvik was on.

"Come on, forward—hop to it—"

The triple files of the combat groups trotted down hill, greeted by the first puffs of shrapnel.

The undertaking confronting the Allies was difficult enough. They did not have enough troops available to try complete encirclement. The enemy must be knocked out of the port by direct attacks. The first task was to cross the Rombaken Fjord from Ojord Peninsula to the Narvik Peninsula, about a mile of open water at the narrowest part. This crossing had to be achieved under artillery and machine gun fire. Upon reaching the enemy's side, the troops would have to fight for a foothold, then to establish a bridgehead, a landing base. This done, they would have to climb the Hill of Orneset, almost three hundred feet high, still under fire. When that was won, the attack would have to fork, one branch charging towards Hills 79 and 102, the other heading eastward, toward the spot known as Hill 457.

Debourg had attended the conference, two days before, at the Legion's Headquarters in the Hills of Ojord. Everything had been explained on the maps. These maps had been corrected according to information given by men who knew the region from childhood.

THE protective barrage from the ships and batteries grew heavier and heavier. All known positions on the German side were drenched with explosives. Nevertheless, shells were raining upon the village of Ojord as the Legionnaires doubled through it toward the port. It sounded to them as if cars filled with coal were being dropped about their ears. But their calm and precision rivaled that of the British sailors handling the boats. The human files were swallowed by the assorted craft, which chugged away through water riddled with fragments of metal six or seven times a minute.

"Third of the ninth, this way, this way—"

"Keep your heads down, duck—" Debourg saw to the stowing of his four groups in one of the steel-bottomed boats. He leaped in, wedged with the rest. The same thought occurred to him

as to all—one of those five-point-nines, or even a seventy-seven, would make things somewhat crowded in here! "Will you keep your head down, you dummy! You're not here as a spectator!"

"We're off—all aboard—got your ticket, Juan?" The men laughed, but their eyes kept turning to the sky. The British were still there. "Eh, do you hear that fellow? Must be a fifteen inch gun—they have a battleship here—" "You're nuts—that's a naval eight inch —eh, listen to that—"

They recognized the metallic detonations of German light machine guns, grown familiar enough at Bjerkvik and Elvegaard not to be forgotten in a hurry. A series of impacts struck the outside of the boat, metal whistled and sobbed overhead.

"All right, all right, come out from there—"

Debourg rose, leaped from the boat. He landed ankle deep in cold water. There was activity all around him, orderly activity. The men from the first boats had gone forward already, leaving a few stretched on the pebbly beach.

"By combat groups—deploy—"

The boots clattered on the black stones, slipped on patches of weeds. There were bullets pattering all around, the ricochets made thin, shrill sounds, the fragments of broken stone snored and sang. But a sort of elation rose in all of them, nevertheless. They were on the same side, there no longer was water between them and their enemies. Above them, an invisible archway of death, rumbled the heavy shells from the ships.

Debourg headed his section from the cover of the nearby wood. A wounded man sat by the wayside, seated in a widening pool of blood that glistened blackly in the soft light.

"How goes it up there—"

"Tough. A shell got the captain of the mortar company, and four guys. Watch out for the barbed wire—"

There was not much of this, a few coils here and there, stretched between the moist, glittering black boulders. But the Nazis were using these spots as landmarks, and the moment men started to remove it, unseen automatics opened in furious bursts. Debourg left his first casualty in the first of these traps, swung a few yards right, found a clear path, trotted on. Right and left, he could see the men of the other sections.

The giant bees were all around them. Ahead, grenades thudded. The combat groups moved on beneath the leafy birches. Someone pointed out the first enemy dead. A big man, in a blue uniform with brass buttons. Somebody said he was a marine. The firing grew nearer and nearer, and Debourg suddenly knew that he was in the front line.

An automatic opened on his section. He waved his hand. The groups behind him divided, trotted to flank the gun. Zantapar was bounding in the lead of the first. He located the Germans, reported with a gesture, fell on his face. From behind, Debourg could see him crawling on with incredible speed, with an astonishing instinct for cover. He stopped, and without lifting his head, threw a couple of grenades. The gun broke off firing in the middle of a burst. All the men rose and raced forward.

The gun, behind a little screen of grassy turf, opened again, but not for long. Zantapar leaped on the gunner, landing in the middle of his back with both feet. One of his comrades knocked up the muzzle of the weapon with a butt blow. There were three Germans there. Two never had the chance to rise, the third started to run for cover farther on. Old Steuwer knelt and broke his spine at the first shot. He reloaded, fired at the exposed skull, the convulsions ceased.

"Who's hit?" Debourg called.

"No one, Lieutenant."

"Forward."

There were a series of small combats inside the battle. Often, the Germans, aware that they had been passed by the first line of the Legion, rose and lifted their hands in token of surrender. Some of them were marines, some Sharpshooters, a few wore uniforms very like those of the Norwegians. Naturally enough, as the invaders were using captured army supplies.

"Start for the beach—" Debourg ordered them. A few blows with the butt were sufficient to put an automatic be-

yond any possibility of use for a while.

Then there was a rush of air, a thud, and two of Debourg's men lay down. Quietly and without fuss, and forever. The lieutenant signaled, his groups divided again, flanked a thirty-seven millimeter cannon, a pretty little thing on rubber-tired wheels. He took the lead, crept up within grenade distance, flung three missiles without pause. His aim was good. The gun was silent.

"A man to guard that. The rest, forward."

THERE was no rigid line of defense, the Nazis were using an elastic defense, interlocking the fire of their machine guns and automatics, the system studied and developed in the Argonne in 1918. Debourg could imagine the officer in charge consulting the manual: "Chapter Five, defense of hilly, wooded country."

The fusillade continued among the trees, yet Debourg sensed that the resistance was weakening. That is an odd phenomenon known to many soldiers—they "feel" when they are winning. In fact, four or five minutes later, he and his men could progress easily, upright. The cannon still raged everywhere, but the approaches to the Orneset ridge were clearing of defenders.

Knots of prisoners appeared oftener and oftener. A voice would sound from behind a tree: "Don't shoot, comrades!" A white face under a bucket helmet would appear tentatively, the whole body would follow. The man would step forward, the blood slowly returning to his cheeks. "My gun's over there."

Suddenly, Debourg started. A rocket had gone up ahead, a signal to the high command that some unit had attained the crest of Orneset Hill. He started to run, and the men behind him shouted: "We've got them, we've got them!"

There were many heavy explosions just ahead, and twin rockets soared into the twilight glow. Lengthen fire, lengthen fire—then the explosions ceased. Possibly, someone on the British ships had mistaken the first signal for a request for a barrage.

Debourg assigned positions to his groups, then ran to meet his captain, Bosquel. The old Legionnaire was beaming.

"Look at your watch, Debourg! One o'clock! We did the job in sixty minutes. Not so wormy, are we?" He grasped his lieutenant's arm, drew him forward. "See that? That's Narvik!"

The good chap shouted that as if he had been a crusader sighting Jerusalem. But Debourg understood him. When the Legion had boarded the transports at Brest, the news had spread. "We're going to Norway, to retake Narvik." And, as Bosquel said, there was Narvik.

It was not particularly impressive, a scattering of cubical houses in gardens, neat with their sloping roofs and painted walls. Here and there, ruins marked the effect of the intense shelling of the past few hours. But it was not conquered as yet, for on Hill 79, not very far, the Nazi flag still flew.

The sections of the Second Battalion, to which Bosquel's company had been attached formerly, were appearing out of the woods. They started at once down the incline, toward Taraldsvik, the beach north of the port. There was a wharf there, a few houses. Debourg had heard that it was a sort of a pleasure resort. It appeared bleak and forlorn enough now, however.

The officers grouped around a staff captain, just come up from the bridgehead, who was reporting the general situation. "We're still under fire at the landing. Had to move the debarkation spot a couple of times. The quick-firers from the railway are doing a lot of harm. We tried to land tanks, but they stick in the mud down below. Too soft to get a grip." He looked at the British planes. "Everything will be all right as long as those are up there. But when they leave—you know, the troops are still being ferried over."

The word was passed along. "Get ready to move."

"Five missing in section, Lieutenant," the senior sergeant reported as the combat groups lined for the march. "Three killed, one wounded, one missing. Rubiolo—no one saw what happened to him."

"Very well. Come on."

The battalion descended into the pass between Orneset Hill and the railway. As the companies deployed, firing resumed. The Germans were still fighting! They had to, as the only line of retreat out of the port was along the railway, toward Sweden.

Debourg's section climbed up the first slope rapidly. They reached the tracks, hemmed in by plain wire fences, broke through these. But after losing six or seven men trying to follow those rails, the lieutenant ordered his groups to continue south, toward Hill 457. Strong resistance along the line itself had been foreseen, and orders given to abandon efforts in that direction if it proved too costly, and to flank the tracks.

Hill 457 was really an inclined plateau, leading to the great mountain dominating the Narvik Peninsula, a peak almost four thousand feet in height. It was strewn with black boulders, and sparsely wooded. The sun was lifting higher in the sky at this moment, and the heat increased rapidly. The "Africans" had spared their water, from long habit, but some of the Spaniards and all of the volunteers had drained their canteens dry. Now the thirsting men spat thick.

Debourg shrugged. These men would suffer severely, as there probably was no water on the plateau. But there was nothing he could do for them. Years in the Sahara had developed his endurance. So he yielded to a friendly gesture, and gave two of the youngest volunteers a drink. At the time, the four groups were hugging the ground, in the lee of some boulders. A Norwegian battalion was moving up on the left, to close the gap to the fjord, and was advancing somewhat less rapidly than the Legion.

A runner halted for breath nearby. Debourg questioned him avidly. He was an old hand at gathering scraps of information and fitting them into a whole during an action.

"The Second Battalion's doing all right before Hill 79," the man said. "I just went back to ask for munitions. And there's a couple of lighters on the way now."

CAPTAIN BOSQUEL'S whistle blew: Advance.

The sections rose, left cover. The Nazis' fire broke out, at a terrifying speed. Bullets and small shells hammered from ahead, and there was a nasty cross-fire from the left, aimed waist high, that was very difficult to duck. The Legionnaires bobbed up and down, kept on, slowly, painfully. When they lifted their heads, they saw on top of the grim mountain ahead, a small red, fluttering spot: a Nazi ensign. And many wondered, as did Debourg, whether they would live to see it hauled down.

They knew that they were facing men as well organized, perhaps better armed than themselves. Some of the small islets of resistance occupied by the Nazis were held by specialists in small-arms combat, crews of parachutists who used very light hand machine guns with admirable skill. Among the defenders were men who had as much experience as the "Africans" and the Spaniards, fellows who had served in Spain and in Poland.

These would foresee the flanking attacks, keep one weapon silent, in reserve, to sprinkle the ambush-spots of the grenadiers at precisely the right instant. And they had some very good grenade-tossers themselves. The damn things would come from unexpected angles, suddenly drop over the overhang of a boulder, or dribble near through the short, coarse grass. They broke with an ear-shattering crash, emitted black smoke, and stank powerfully.

Here, evidently, the Germans had different instructions. On the slope of Orneset Hill, they had waged a delaying action. On Hill 457, they did not mean the enemy to pass at all. For there were no surrenders, no lifting of arms, no cheerful prisoners trotting up. Wounded men had to be dispatched like mangled cobras, for they kept shooting and tossing grenades as long as they could move.

Debourg lost five men in forty yards. The sleeve of his tunic was ripped by bullets, his neck and cheek painfully pitted by flying stone fragments from a grenade burst. He picked out the

minute slivers with his fingers, between breathless runs.

There was no need to estimate range. The fighting took place with the combatants fifty to one hundred meters apart. Individual marksmanship counted. During the rushes, the automatics were worse, during the pauses, the carbines and long-barreled pistols. A man flat on his face, fumbling for his cartridges, had his elbow smashed by an accurate sniper.

"Five and one—six. And six, no, seven, thirteen. And five, eighteen—" Debourg counted mentally. "At this rate, I'll have about enough men to last another mile."

Someone in authority must have had the same thought, for the signal to stop was given. The men organized their positions, moving cautiously. Even the volunteers were developing the knack of throwing up a few inches of dirt with the small spade, and without exposing themselves. There was nothing like combat conditions to teach a man his soldier's job!

Debourg stretched out his left arm to look at his watch: two fifty-six. Precisely three hours ago, he had consulted the dial, over there, under the trees, above Ojord. In his own small unit, at least ten men had died in the interval, and eight more would carry scars all their lives. At three fifty-six, would he, Debourg, be alive to look at his watch again? If so, where would he be? Here? On the mountain? Two hundred yards ahead? Back on the beach? Victor, wounded, prisoner?

"Ammunition'll run short, Lieutenant, if—"

"I know. Orders are given. Don't worry."

"May I go back a bit, Lieutenant? Sislow had two spare sacks of magazines. He isn't far."

"All right. But be careful."

What a damn fool thing to say! As if that corporal needed his advice. He must remember this. It took guts to leave shelter voluntarily. He was unwilling to turn to watch the man's progress. Across the way, from beneath a boulder, the rifle muzzle of a German served as an indicator. When it ceased to flash, his corporal would be dead.

Debourg watched the flashes. The man was growing interested in his target, pushing himself forward, probably without being aware of it. He was stretched against the far side of the big rock, had to bend his body to shoot. Before long, his right leg showed, propped up by the uneven ground. Just a length of boot and the foot.

Debourg reached out toward the nearest private. "Let's have that—" and he took the carbine. He must not miss, even once, or the chap would jerk that leg to safety. He tested the gun in another direction, once, twice.

The German's rifle flashed. The fool, Debourg could see his face now, peering up quickly. He lined the sights above that rifle. He waited for the next flash. It came. He fired. The other's head lowered, presenting the top of his helmet, the rifle jerked up at an angle. It stayed there.

Debourg returned the gun to the grinning man, who had watched.

"Good shot, Lieutenant."

"Passable. One hundred and fifty meters." No, it was not a remarkable shot, just passable. In his youth, Debourg had killed chamois at four times the distance. Then when he had seen the dead animal, he had felt sick. Possibly, if he looked at that poor chap too closely, he would feel sick again. He laughed shortly. He was very much like a certain Austrian archduke, who loved to shoot game, but refused to look at it afterward.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NAZI MYTH

THE corporal was back with the dead man's ammunition sacks. A pair of carriers arrived with more. "These will have to do for a while, Lieutenant. They say one of the munition barges blew up. Direct hit."

The magazines were distributed among the automatic crews.

Even the most careful man had now finished his water. And there was nothing to do save wait, and suffer. The

sun was hot, and even on this wind-swept plateau, mosquitoes were buzzing. Not many, but they were oddly annoying.

No orders came, the advance had frozen still. There was a lot of shooting right and left, and behind. Debourg tried to guess what was happening. But he had lost track of various units, the plan of action, so well memorized, was confused in his mind.

Three fourteen.

The sky vibrated with the drone of the bombers. Debourg propped himself on one elbow to look up. The British machines had flown away, to refuel. They had been in the air almost constantly for seven hours. And as soon as they were out of sight, the Nazis appeared. It was maddening. Where were those planes based? Did they hover at a distance, flying in circles, waiting for the British to go? How in hell did they get their timing?

The cannonade, which had been steady and rhythmical, reassumed a mad beat, as the anti-aircraft guns of the ships strove to keep the bombers high. Explosions thudded, echoed on the fjord. What was happening to the barges crowded with men? To the little ports, the landing base?

"We're too close to their own line to be attacked," Debourg thought. "This is one time we'll escape."

He was wrong. Some of the machines made for the plateau. They flew so low that their bellies seemed to skim the boulders and the trees. On they came, machine guns blasting, small shells exploding in rows a couple of hundred yards before them. As they passed, they dropped very small bombs, only four times the size of hand grenades. And they seemed to know just where to strike. Men were lifted by the explosions, boulders jarred from their bases. The big bullets of the machine guns rattled like titanic hail.

"Alert, alert—they're coming—"

The Nazis were attacking on the ground too. Obviously, this was a concerted action, arranged in advance. Probably, the Germans had colored cloth panels to indicate their nationality to the flyers. They trotted forward, crouching, automatics hammering as they came in long, mobile files.

A Legion automatic, a second, a third, went into action. Debourg settled down behind another, just re-propped. He could do nothing much against the planes, but these swine would pay for the others. The roles were reversed now, the swine were in the open—the swine!

They were smart and they were game, and they used every known trick and a few new ones, but they were not bullet-proof! They ran and they fell, to run no more. Those active guys in the lead, they were grenadiers. Very well, a few bursts, special for grenadiers. The feeder was replacing the empty magazines with deft, calm movements. Debourg was firing with astonishing speed.

He was very pleased with that, and he shouted it to them as they came, in their own language, so they would understand: *"Mit rasender Schnelligkeit!"* Yes, with fearsome speed. He could almost play those words on the gun, like this: *"Mitrasenderschnel—ligkeit! Schnelligkeitschnellig — keitmitrasender—"*

No, they were not bullet-proof, they all fell. In the lull, Debourg surrendered the handling of the gun to its owner, who looked at him somewhat oddly. The officer realized that he had been shouting.

"It's all right, Villarca—excitement, you know."

"Yes, Lieutenant," the man agreed, after peering anxiously at the breech-mechanism. "But that's a swell way to get a dilated barrel!"

Debourg laughed. Around him, the *voltigeurs* of his group, armed with rifles, were picking off the Germans who still moved. It was better not to take chances. A single grenade might cause a lot of damage, and humane consideration belonged at home for the moment. Another rush was checked instantly, pinned to the ground before it was well started.

But on the left, the Germans had driven a wedge. Debourg ordered a machine gun played at long range on the flank of infiltrating detachments. Other groups slunk by to the right, beyond good range.

A runner arrived, dropped panting beside Debourg.

"Lieutenant—if can't—hold—permitted—fall back to—rail—the damn Norwegians—are stuck—beating it—Major expects—strong attack—"

"Take it easy, lad," said Debourg. "Inform him we're all right. Sticking."

The man left, bent over, loping like a hare. Debourg saw that the balance of his company had recovered its former positions. There was no sense retreating, as the sections would only have to advance again when the time

The bombers came over so low their bellies seemed to skim the trees.

came. Of course, the Germans might close in behind them from right and left. But in that case, it would mean the battle as a whole was lost, and being killed or captured would not matter much.

HE consulted a small sketch he had made of the region. Yes, the Germans were infiltrating toward the beach, at the weakest point, the Norwegians' lines. If they succeeded, they would get the landing bases under automatic and machine gun fire, and wipe out the companies as they disembarked. If that occurred, the whole lot of Allied troops on Narvik Peninsula was trapped.

He understood why the Norwegians had fallen back. They were inexperienced, and the air raid had shaken them. Even his Legionnaires, most of them veterans, professionals, had showed signs of nervousness. The Norwegians lacked many things that the others had. For instance, they were not experts with grenades. They had been supplied with British missiles, unfamiliar to them. Their withdrawal would not last long—they were brave, strong, steady fellows, and would not panic. In a few minutes, they would have recovered enough to fight back.

The German detachments were filtering on the flanks, avoiding the front of the company, confident that they could isolate it and chop it to bits at leisure. Their light-caliber automatics sounded down the slopes, quite remote. Then they drew nearer again.

"Coming back this way," a sergeant said. He had been listening too. Five minutes later, the pause was finished, the automatics at work again. In the distance, four, five hundred meters off, Germans fell. They were trotting back quickly, showed less doggedness than before. Perhaps because the drive on the landing points had been repulsed so quickly.

The green uniforms of the Norwegians, advancing by squads, appeared behind them. Bayonets flashed in an irregular line—the Northerners had taken to the steel. Nothing would halt them this time, nothing but death. Somewhere down below, in the heat of action, in the confusion of retreat, they had found themselves.

The specialists of smashing attacks, the veteran slaughterers of Poland, were being brushed back by those amateurs. Recruits and Landsturmers, they came on. They walked into the sheaves of bullets, into the bursts of grenades. Some fell, the rest came on.

And on the right of the line, suddenly, contact was established with the Second Battalion of the Legion, the men who had cleared Hills 79 and 102 of defenders, had skirted reconquered Narvik and were seeking further fighting.

"We've got Narvik!" someone called out.

The news spread quickly. The Germans must also have learned it, for they fell back more and more swiftly. The Legionnaires pursued them, surrounded their islets of resistance, submerged them with a hail of grenades. They shouted and perspired.

"Off with those coats," Debourg called, during a brief pause. "Down packs—we'll find them later, if we need them—" The men obeyed gladly. "Come on, Legionnaires. They can be licked!"

The Legionnaires and Norwegians continued the ascent of Hill 457. Behind them, the smoke from fires around and in Narvik rose in great columns that caught in the wind and spread a purplish haze across the blue. For the first time in this war, the Germans had been thrown out of a place they wished to hold.

It was a rag of glory in the drab cloth of defeat.

"NINE fifty-six—"

The mopping up of the plateau continued. The German flag had been hauled down from the mountains, their forces were in full retreat toward Sweden. Ammunition and water had been brought the front line fighters.

Debourg's section, reduced to twenty-two noncommissioned and privates, marched ahead, squinting in the strong glare. Organized resistance had ended, but knots of stragglers were trying to escape the closing net. In the majority

of cases, these surrendered when sure they were trapped. On some occasions, they had to be killed.

A man called Debourg's attention.

"Couple of them over there, Lieutenant—saw them—"

He indicated a mass of dark rocks. Debourg strode forward, shouting: "Drop your weapons. Show your hands! Come on out—"

A grenade fell nearby. He threw himself flat, it exploded.

"Come, comrades, you have no chance."

While he was speaking, men were trotting on the sides, to flank the position. They opened fire for some seconds. Then there was a hail, and two soldiers appeared, hands high.

"There's one left, Lieutenant, watch out—" a private called.

"He must be wounded—" Debourg said. He went forward, there was a sharp detonation. He felt something like a sharp blow with a stick on his left arm. "All right—go ahead—"

The Legionnaires tossed two or three grenades, then went to investigate. Debourg followed them. His arm stung, and blood was dripping down his sleeve.

Two men carried the German into the open. He was an officer, a captain, from his shoulder-markings. He had been hit in the legs. Debourg leaned toward him. "It was needless. You could have spared us both some trouble, Captain—"

"I tried to, didn't I?" Max was smiling up at him, a twisted smirk of pain. "You crop up everywhere, give one no peace. You know I couldn't surrender."

"Sorry—"

"Yes, so, sorry. Now, it will drag out. Unless—Franz?"

Debourg understood his meaning. He was ready to go, here in the open, without the sinister formalities of a court-martial. A surge of pity swept him, almost gave him the needed resolution. He lifted his sound hand, with the gun poised. But one of his corporals knocked it down again, with a single word of reproach: "Lieutenant."

True, the poor chap could not know, could not understand. And Debourg was losing strength, his brief flash of will had passed. No, he could not shoot his brother as if he were a sick dog.

Stretcher-bearers arrived. By now, they were following close on the heels of the advance. Upon a nod from Debourg, the senior sergeant took the section forward. A first-aid man, obeying Debourg's order to treat the prisoner first, slashed Max's trousers and boots, exposing mangled, bleeding flesh.

"You caught it good, Captain," he said as he called for more bandages. "Both tibias. The articulation of the right knee's pretty bad, too. We'll just give you a quick dressing now that'll do until we get you to a surgeon."

"What will you bet," Max asked him with a grin, "that I'll never have to use an artificial leg?"

"I hope not, Captain." The ambulance man did not understand Max's grim joke. He had turned to Debourg, slit the sleeve. "Flesh. But you better walk back to the station, have it looked at and get your injection. I'll unbutton your tunic, put your hand inside—that's it—"

Debourg caught up with the stretcher, walked beside it.

"Well, the war's over for me, eh, Franz?"

"Yes. Does it hurt much?"

"Doesn't feel good. Glad I missed you. Really didn't know it was you. Wouldn't hurt you, Franz. Not unless there was a purpose. Just as well they'll shoot me. Amputation. That's rotten luck. How is—my fiancée? Did you people arrest her?"

"Yes. But they can't prove much on her. Cigarette?"

"Yes—thanks. Would you tell them to take it a bit slower? Yes, that's better. Lovely girl. Hope they let her go. She'll have little Scandinavians instead of little Austrians. What matters, really." He sucked at the cigarette. "What a face you're making, Franz. You look as gloomy as a Social Democrat!"

Then shock and loss of blood asserted themselves, Max grew feverish, incoherent. At the field-station, Debourg had to part from him. When his own wound had been cleaned out and dressed, he sought news. The surgeon was a German, captured that day.

"That right leg will have to come off. We hope to save the left. He will live. Phenomenal constitution, that chap!"

"Would delay be dangerous?"

"Delays are always dangerous. But he himself seems set against our intervention. Says it's useless to—" The doctor listened to Debourg's explanation. "Yes, I understand now. We'll give him injections, wait a reasonable time. But our first duty is to save life. For how long is not always our concern."

The surgeon was somewhat brusque with Debourg since he had learned of his Austrian birth. The lieutenant obtained a ride to Narvik on a light truck. The inhabitants seemed happy to be rid of the Nazis, hailed the French. Debourg located Lieutenant Berrier at the port, where he was questioning prisoners taken at Hill 102.

"The poor devil—" the Intelligence man said.

"But what will be done with him? It seems ghastly to allow him to suffer for weeks only to—" Debourg clenched his hands. "I know it's the risk of the business, but I go crazy when I think of it."

"He was in uniform when captured?"

"Yes."

"Had papers as Captain Baron Max Von Riegersburg?"

"Yes."

"Who knows the situation?"

"I spoke to the doctor—"

"You said he was a German. He'll keep his mouth shut. Listen, I can't promise anything on my own. I'll see the general. It is certain that your—the prisoner—cannot serve actively again for the duration of this war?"

"Crippled for life."

"I'll explain that we must either allow him to be amputated, hang around in hospitals for months before shooting him, or shoot him as he is. Propped up on his stretcher against a wall or a tree. That happened once or twice in the other war, and made no end of a stink. He can do us no more harm, and he is punished beyond anything we could have done. We can't be as ruthless as *they* are. I'm pretty sure that I can have him tagged as a military wounded, have him evacuated as such."

Debourg clasped his hands, with tears in his eyes.

"Thanks."

"Don't be a sap. I'm a born point-stretcher."

DEBOURG located Max in the military hospital organized for prisoners. He told him the good news. The other wept, for his strong will was cracking under strain, suffering, and weakness.

"The devil of a favor. Listen, could you do something else, Franz? Could I see Odette while I'm still in one piece? I have to make her understand that it's all over."

"One never knows, Max. I'll try to bring her."

Berrier was again pressed into service. In Mademoiselle Odette's case, the lieutenant had also stretched a point, believed her story officially. She was in the custody of her father. Debourg met him. Tholfson was a big, quiet Scandinavian, and seemed bewildered and hurt by his daughter's peculiar actions. At first, he refused to permit the meeting.

"She is a child, a generous child. He is a man, a clever man. He used her—no, no, he deserves no sympathy. Even my daughter has been made to understand that. He had not pity, why should we have it? She will refuse in person—if you doubt me. If anything, I am too indulgent a father. Odette—"

Odette appeared. She wore a white sweater and loose gray slacks. Debourg rose when she entered, and his eyes were drawn to the bruises on the left side of her face. The lividity about the eyes was not quite concealed by cosmetics. He wondered whether he should apologize or not, decided against it. Certain subjects are better dropped. He explained the situation again.

To her father's astonishment, she agreed to see Max.

"When can I go, Lieutenant Debourg?"

"The sooner the better. They're waiting to operate."

Odette took only time to get a coat and a beret, and the three started for the hospital. Max was in a room with five other wounded officers. The surgeon

asked for a short delay, while a screen was put up.

"Do you speak German, miss? Yes, so. Now, you go in, keep very quiet, do not contradict him. If you disagree with anything he says, tell him you'll talk about it when he is well. You are engaged to him, yes? Even at his request, do not agree outright to a break. He may need hope."

Odette nodded. Debourg was struck by the fact that she seemed anxious to hide the left side of her face, for she did not face the doctor. He felt dimly ashamed of his violence, yet cursed himself for a fool. Would it have been better for him to die?

"Now, miss."

The door opened, closed. Debourg and Tholfson settled themselves for a long wait. The old Norwegian, with a pathetic effort to be friendly, courteous, spoke of his French wife. He believed Debourg to be French. Thirty seconds went by, there was a muffled thud, another, then several in succession. They seemed very near, on the other side of the door.

"Pistol shots—"

The two men ran to the door, which opened suddenly. The surgeon and a half-naked man jostled Odette through it. Orderlies, soldiers, other wounded men, crowded into the narrow hospital corridor.

"What happened—*man hat geschossen*—there—" They herded around the girl, who had started to sob. The undressed man, one of the patients, showed a small revolver. "With this— she shot him—with this—she shot him—" he repeated dazedly.

Tholfson was shouting, trying to push away the men holding his daughter. Debourg could not understand what she was saying, for she spoke swiftly, in Norwegian. He ran toward the door, but the surgeon intercepted him.

"No need—better not—fired at his head — point-blank — horrible business this!" The medical officer caught an orderly by the shoulder. "What is she saying? Do you understand—"

"She says that he was a spy and betrayed Norway, that he tricked her, and she is a Norwegian!"

DEBOURG did not see Lieutenant Berrier for several days thereafter.

Despite his wound, he had joined his section, to participate in the brief campaign that drove the defenders of Narvik back to the Swedish frontier. There were a few hard combats, frequent air raids. At last, there seemed nothing left for the Nazis save to cross into Sweden or to surrender to the French. The Legion had performed as well upon the snowy mountains as on the torrid plateau at Hill 457.

Then the blow fell. They were recalled to Narvik, informed that the operations in the Northland would be abandoned. The Legion, sent to Norway to retake Narvik, had retaken Narvik. A third of its men were left behind, under ground. Many others were carried away on stretchers. Of Debourg's original section, but eleven men remained fit for duty. Zantapar and old Steuwer were among them. They seemed to belong to the legendary breed of soldiers who always report with the survivors.

The Legionnaires embarked. A tacit truce existed, there was no droning of planes in the beautiful sky. Narvik slid away, with its battered houses, its toy railway, and the foreign dead within its earth. The Legionnaires were on the move again, those eternal wanderers had started on another fantastic journey. They were to witness the downfall of France, in Brittany. Refusing to surrender, they were to escape to England, there to be incorporated in the Free French Forces gathered by General de Gaulle.

They would be off Dakar, on the transports, on that gloomy day when Frenchmen fired on their brethren. They were to land in the Cameroons, to share in the conquest of the Vichy-held Gabon. They were to cross the heart of Africa, and not many months later, they would carry to another victory, over the Italian forces defending Eritrea, the green and red flag of the Legion presented to them by the population of Narvik, on which Norwegian women had embroidered that city's coat-of-arms.

They lined the rails, looking back

upon their past without shame, facing the future without fear: Legionnaires. The transport hove to, while still inside the fjord, and the last of their dead was lowered to the icy water. The sound of bugles died away, the echoes of the farewell volley came from the snowy slopes. The siren uttered its mournful, giant bleat, and it was over.

Debourg lowered his hand, turned away, and saw Berrier standing near. The man's round face was white with emotion.

"We leave a good many fine fellows there," he said, lifting his chin to indicate the shore. "But they're paid for. We got a lot of the swine, too. Ah—I'm sorry, old chap."

Debourg smiled sadly.

"You're quite right. They paid for our dead. And we beat them, really, beat them without planes, without spies, without traitors. In due time, we'll beat them everywhere. But we have a war on our hands for a while. What became of Odette?"

"She was being held for trial, but when our evacuation became certain, she was released. Everyone around here knows what she did, and if the Germans had found her here when they returned, they would have executed her without so many ceremonies! Her father told me he would try to escape through Russia. Have a cigarette?"

Debourg twisted the white cylinder between the fingers of one hand, staring at it thoughtfully.

"You know," he started slowly, "I hope that she gets away. Not that I believe for a moment that patriotism had anything to do with her shooting Max. He had not tricked her into betraying Norway, she knew perfectly well what he was doing. But she was a woman in love, and her man came before her country." He paused, cleared his throat. "I admire her. She knew how proud he was, how he'd hate living on as a cripple, especially with the war going on. She had the guts to do what I was too weak to do."

Berrier offered him his lighter.

"Here, I forgot that bum arm of yours. Old chap, I don't know if I should dispel your sentimental illusions. I agree with you that she loved your brother. I also admit that she did not care whether he worked for Germany or China. But it was not love, nor mercy, nor pity, that prompted the shooting."

"In your opinion, what was it?"

"You'll understand in a moment. You remember I told you I had a way to make her talk. I left her alone for two minutes in my office, at Lilleberg, and she read a report I had made out on Runeding for the Staff. When I came back, she had shoved it back into the folder, and was willing to name everyone he had been in contact with in Norway. There was one little item, following his physical description, that did the trick: 'Wife and two children presumed to be residing in Graz.'"

Debourg started. "I didn't know he was married—"

"Neither did I. I invented the marriage, the children. If I had told her, she would not have believed me. When she read it in a report, she never doubted it. So she leaped at the chance to see him, and took along that little revolver. Just a plain, everyday melodrama, the woman deceived, jealousy, bang! My fault, in a way. I totally forgot to enlighten her later."

"It worked out for the best," Debourg said.

He contemplated the distant coast. Then he tossed the cigarette stub into the sea.

THE PERIODS OF CHESTY JONES

By W. C. TUTTLE

Smoke Tree
April 20.

Mr. Bill McColl
Majer Leeg Umpire
New York City.
Dear Bill;

Well, Bill, when you got that letter from I and Chesty, I will bet you sat rite down and felt awful sorry for the Sundown Leeg for ever re-leasing two such umpires as us two. I will bet your old neck got red over it, eh? But I and Chesty felt as bad as you did, when

"Take a look at this one," he says, throwing a curve ball at the mayor.

it dauned upon us that we had been fired for something of which we are as innocent as a new baby.

Here we was, giving our best for the national past time, never missing a assignment, except when the Maxwell broke down in the dessert, and all we got was the blew envelope. Well, Bill, next morning after what the newspapers called a debickle at the ball orchard, I and Chesty went down to the garage to see our car. It wasn't so bad, even if it did knock down a woman's picket fence, tare up her flour beds and have the police hunting for the victims. Hitting that barber pole and taring the awning off the grocery store didn't help it much, but it was still in pretty fare shape, except that the front wheels toe out a little.

Chesty asked me where we are going, because he is a little confused. We only talked it over a couple hours. It takes him quite a while to get things strate, but he is like a elephant, he never forgets, except when he gets what I call periods. He is a very fine character, but some times he wakes up in the night and goes pawing around on the floor, like he was trying to pick up his mask. I ask him what is wrong, and he will say, you hook-brane, you noddid your head when I signaled for a curve and then you throw me a fast ball that slid at least a foot. No wonder I got it on the head.

See what I mean, Bill? That's a period. You never seen Chesty's head after a close hare-cut, did you? His indomitable will and couple cow-licks is all that holds him together.

But he has proved to me that he is a grate umpire indeed, except during a period.

I says to Chesty, we are going back to Fresno and try to get our old jobs back with the Golden Goose Truk co. He says, we don't like to umpire, eh? I says, listen, Chesty, don't you remember yesterday? And he says, nothing in particular, except it was a nice day.

Bill, I lost my bridge works (false teeth to you) and we both got beat up pretty bad, but Chesty said he never paid no attention to the small things of life. I asked him who won the game and he says, well, I left in the seventh and the score was five to two in faver of the Giants, and when you give Matthewson a lead like that, you can not beat him.

I says, listen, Chesty, this is the Sundown leeg, not the national. He says, I liked the other name best. I says, get into that automobile and we will head for California. Bill, I knew he was in the middle of a period, so there was no use arguing with him. We got into the Maxwell, but before we can start, who do you think came in? It was Emmeline Greenbaum, which is the daughter of the president of the leeg. She says, O, I am so glad I found you, and I says, lady, the feeling is mutuals. Chesty says don't pick up no hitch-hikers, because we ain't got no rooms.

Then she says, Mr. Simpson, my father, which is the president, wishes you two to come at once to his office. It is important because he got a telegram from Paradise Flats a few minutes ago and it is important for you to see him, because they are in dire straits. Chesty asks me what they're in and I says, they're in dire straits.

Miss Emmeline says, that means they are in bad shape. Chesty says, this is a fine time to start squawking about something they have been in all their lives. Well, Bill, I asked Miss Emmeline to ride over to her father's office, but she looked at them front wheels and decided she had to do some shopping.

Well, Bill, we backed out of that garage and Chesty says, who was the lady, and I says, Chesty, that is the daughter of the president. And he says, My God, are we in Washington already? I hope Bucky Harris don't see me, because I owe him two dollars.

Bill, you can see what I have to content with. Wel, Mr. Greenbaum, the leeg president was glad to see me and shook my hand. So did Chesty. Mr. Greenbaum says, I just got a urgent wire from Paradise Flats, and they need a couple umpires awful bad. The two they had, which is Elmer Botts and Hozie Wells have got meazils. I says, Mr. Greenbaum, I know both of those umpires and I am sorry for the meazils. He says, This job is making a old man out

of me. If I have any more protested games, I believe I will make a new schedule and start all over again. He says, do you think you can take holt over there and bring order out of kayous. I did not know what he meant, but you know me, Bill. I says, you leave it to us. If good umpiring can warm your heart, you better go where it is cold for a few days or the doctor will think you have a fever. He says, if I can finish one game and not have a riot I shall feel that I have not lived in vane. He says, are you afraid of meazils?

Chesty says, I am only afraid of one thing in the world and that is being sent to Peoria.

I says, Mr. Greenbaum, the leeg is in good hands. We will go to Paradise Flats and handle everything. He said, God go with you and Chesty says don't forget the fack that we've only got the one seat.

Well, Bill, I got to thinking what you would have done in my place. I says to Chesty, take Bill McColl for instance. Bill never had nerve nor judgment, while me and you are superior in every way, being capable, active and honest. But look how fate treats us, while Bill gets all the brakes. Chesty says, yeah, and he acted like he owned the erth. Chesty says, Bill was just like one of them high way cops, when you ain't doing anything wrong, but he yells, hey, you lug, pull over and stop! Right or vice versa you get a ticket. You'd say real pleasant-like, Mr. McColl, did not that pitch get the outside corner? And Mr. McColl would say, hey, you lunk-head, you do the catching and I'll do the umpiring.

I says, well, Chesty, we will get a brake in Paradise Flats. I hope I am right, Bill. Well, I must close now and get ready for Paradise Flats. I will male this as soon as we get there. I asked Chesty if he wanted to send you his best, and he said, if you know Bill as well as I do, he'd take it anyway, so save the pencil. Funny, eh? Write soon as possible.

Yrs respy
Mortimer Lefty Simpson
and Chesty Jones, the two
boys in blew

Paradise Flats
April 21.

Mr. Bill McColl
Majer Leeg Umpire
New York City.

Dear Bill;

Well, Bill, I'll bet you got a boot out of my last letter. In the front of the letter I was as low as a snake's belly in Deth Valley, but in the last part I was hopped up and also in a hurry. That Maxwell had me worried. Them front wheels toed out so much that when we wanted to tern it we had to both bulldog the wheel by mite and mane to get it out of a strate line. Both I and Chesty had to hang onto the wheel, but Chesty kept going to sleep and blowing the horn with his head. Well, Bill, it was a nitemare as they say in the books. Paradise Flats is a hundred miles from Smoke Tree with its unpleasant memries, and lots of narrow roads and crooked grades.

Well Bill, we are going along all right on a narrow road when along comes a heavy bus, going awful fast. They hawnked and hawnked, but I and Chesty had a hard time pulling over, after which they piled dust all over us and took off my left fender. Bill, I was awful mad, and I was worse than that when Chesty says, Lefty, that was Hank Duvall and his team from Smoke Tree.

I says, you hang on, Chesty and I will learn Hank a lesson. I will go past him and give him some dust to eat, or my name ain't Lefty Simpson. Bill, that Maxwell is not much to look upon, but it can go fast, so I took out after them and I hawnked and hawnked. We must have been going very close to forty miles an hour, when all to once the bus put on its brakes. I shoved my brake clear through the boards, but it did not take.

Bill, there was no chance for us to turn out, because we can not turn so we hit them rite square in the hind end. Bill, we must have hit awful hard, because when I woke up I and Chesty both have holt of the steering wheel and we are trying awful hard to turn the car, but the wheel is not on the steering post any more. But we are going like the devil and the dust is pouring through our busted wind sheeld.

I says to Chesty, what's going on? And he says, as far as I can see—we are. Bill, Old Chesty sure looked funny with a skinned nose and one eye shut, like he was winking at you. Chesty says, there is no use of me and you twisting this wheel any more, so we might as well turn our minds to nobler things. Well, Bill, I can see that we have locked bumpers with the bus and are being toed for nothing. I says, well, Chesty, at least we are saving gas, and just then we hit an awful bump, which unhooked our bumpers, and the Maxwell went rite off across country, leaping brush and cactus, until we stopped rite in a cactus patch.

Well, Bill, we got out and looked it over. Our front bumper is gone and both hed-lights are gone and a fender is gone, and, Bill, the front of that Maxwell looks like it had been sturd with a spoon. I sat down on the wheel which ain't got any fender and I says, Chesty, it never ranes but it pours. He says, I must be hurt worse than I thought because I can not even feel the rane.

Then a feller comes walking through the sand and he says, I seen you go off the road and I knew you was wrecked or mistook a cow path for a road. He says, where are you gents going? I says, this season or next? In our business you never know your luck. He says to Chesty, you better get him to a doctor, because he talks like he was hurt. I says, I am not hurt, except down in my heart, and if that bus had not backed into us we would be almost to Paradise Flats by this time.

He says, do you know who was in that bus? Bill, this time I kept my mouth shut. He says, it is the Smoke Tree baseball club, and I am going over to Paradise Flats to watch them play, because I'm crazy about that team. I says, can they play baseball good? He says, good? He says, they are the best team on earth and the only thing that keeps them from winning all the games is because the umpires are all deef, dumb and blind. He says, we tried to kill a couple in Smoke Tree, but botched the job. He says, do you know anything about baseball? I says, no, I do not follow the game much, but is it not murder to kill umpires? He says, well, it is, in a way, so I have a shotgun loaded with rock salt, which I am taking to Paradise Flats with me. It does not kill, but it stings.

Well, Bill, the upshot of it was that he toed us to Paradise Flats, without knowing who we are, and left us at a garage. Then here comes Hank Duvall, and I says, is your club playing here, and he says, we are, and I want to know if you two are supposed to umpire this seeries? I says, we are sent here by the special request of the pres of the leeg, because the other two umpires have the meazils and can not work.

He says, meazils? That was not meazils. The telegram said it looked like meazils. I says, well, if it was not meazils, what was it? And Hank Duvall says, it was bird-shot, and if you two are wise you will keep on going.

Well, Bill, I says to Hank Duvall, listen you sage brush Romero, the umpire is supreem in this leeg the same as any other, and we will give our best because the pres of the leeg sent us here, but if we had known your club was to play here we would have rather wore steel bills and picked grane with the chickens than to have agreed to umpire this seeries.

Hank says, well, I would have gladly pade for the steel bills, because you two will never give us a square deal, but I warn you that I wash my hands of anything that might happen to you. I says, that will be the first time you have ever washed your hands since I knew you, and it won't hurt much if you dab a little of the water on your neck.

Well, Bill, we talked things over with the garage man and he said our best bet was to jack up the radiator ornament and run another car under it. You will have to admit that it was in bad shape. But he made us a swell trade for a 1916 Model T, which was in grate shape, except for the body, which did not have any top nor back seat and no wind sheeld. He said if we wanted to we could turn the body around and use the back window for a wind sheeld. He said he would cut a hole in the end for the peddils and all that; so we made the trade.

Ferdinand Chesty Jones

Well, Bill, we got a room over Kitzelmyer's grocery store. He is the pres of the Paradise Flats team, and felt sorry for us. There ain't no water in the room and only one window which looks out the back, if you could be that tall, and it is not exactly what you would call cozie, but it will do. Mr. Kitzelmyer has a daughter named Hulda, which is the bell of the town. Mr. Kitzelmyer is a fine man and the leading citizen. I asked him what about baths and he said he would arrange with the livery-stable to let us have the watering-troft after dark, and after the ball players got through with it. So, Bill, you can see we are fixed up fine. That troft will beat using the hoze at the ball park, which mostly always leeks.

Bill, this town is crazy over baseball, and they want to see a game umpired right. It seams that Hozie and Elmer did not know the rules. Of course, I do not approve of people bringing shotguns to the park to shoot umpires when they boot a play, but after all an umpire should know the rules, and only has himself to blame when he rules versus the book. If I do say it myself, I and Chesty know the rules backwards. Chesty is thinking of writing a new book of rules so that everybody can understand them. I think he can do it, except during a period.

Bill, what is the rule in the Majer Leeg about shotguns in the parks? Out here most everybody, except the ladies carry guns. Maybe they do too, but not in sight. I wouldn't know about the rest. Chesty says it was certinly tame in the Coast League, where nobody wares guns. I says, well, I'm not so sure some of them didn't, but I never seen them, and then Chesty says, you was too busy duking line drives to know what folks was wearing. Chesty, is a grate kidder, Bill.

Bill, I heard that there's a pitcher in the Majer Leegs which has almost as much smoke as I had. Remember how you used to duk and yell ball, every time I used my hi-hard one. I guess you was afraid I would throw it right through the catcher, eh? Remember the time you fired Old Chesty out of the game and fined him ten dollars for dodging a ball, which hit you in the ribs. Bill, he never dodged that ball. It was my Sunday curve, which went around Chesty and hit you.

Chesty said, tell Bill about the old rooster we had. Well, Bill, when I and Chesty was with the Golden Goose Truk co, we had a old red-necked rooster around the yard, which Chesty named Bill McColl. Chesty used to yell at the rooster, hey, Bill, didn't that last pitch get a hunk of the corner? And, Bill, that rooster would strut away, talking to himself just like you used to do. All the boys got a kick out of it. Chesty says, that rooster has got a evil eye, just like Bill McColl.

Well, Bill, I've got to buy a small stake for Chesty's eye, because he has got to be in the pink for tomorrow. I just seen Hank Duvall with Hulda Kitzelmyer. I guess I will have to tell her father a few things about Hank, because this girl looks pretty and awful innocent. If you hear of any good openings in the Majer Leeg, it will not cost you much to send us a short wire. Let me hear from you, Bill, because I and Chesty enjoy your letters.

Yrs still in Blew Uniform.
Mortimer Lefty Simpson.

P. S. Bill, have you heard anything about a new rule? I hunted all over for Chesty, and when he came to the

room he said he had been to the Draft board. He seen their sign and went in. I said, they don't draft you at this time of the year, and he says, the hell they don't. They even asked me where I'd like to go and I said, anywhere, except Peoria. I says, well, did you get drafted? And he said, they ain't yet, because I held out for half of the draft price. Bill, I will see them tomorrow and see if there is a chance to get into some of the AA leagues. This might be the brake we have been looking for.

Lefty

Smoke Tree
April 21

Mr. Bill McColl
Majer Leeg Umpire
New York City.

Dear Bill;

Well, Bill, I found out about the draft. I went down there this morning and asked about my chances of getting into a AA leeg, and the man said how old are you and did you register? I says, I am thirty-eight years old and I have always voted Democrat. He says you are too old. I says, Bill McColl must be fifty, if he is a day, and he is in the Majer Leeg. The man says, you mean he is a Majer? I says, well, if you ask Bill he will probly claim that he is the whole leeg. He asked me if I was anxious to fight for freedom and the democrats, and I said, when did we lose our freedom, and what are the democrats fighting for anyway? Then he explained that they were drafting men for the army. Bill there is one nice thing about umpiring—you do not have to join the army to have fights.

Bill, I forgot to tell you about last night. It is after dark and I and Chesty are up in our room, when the young man from the livery stable comes up and he tells us that Mr. Kitzelmyer has arranged for us to take a bath in the watering troft at the stable. He says, I would advise you to take your bath tonight because there will be so many players to take baths tomorrow night that you might not get a chance.

Well, Bill, that sounded good to us. We went over to the stable, where they had the troft. It is about fifteen feet long, three feet wide and about two feet deep in water. It is pretty dark over there, so we took off our clothes. That water felt awful cold, and I and Chesty are dabbing our toes in it, when we heard voices, which sound very much like a woman. They are coming toward us, so I says to Chesty, we have got to get in the troft until they are passed.

Bill, I give you my word, which has never been broken, that water had ice in it. You can easy feel the chunks. But those people did not go past. I heard the woman say, let us sit on the edge of the troft and you can tell me the story of your life. Bill, can you imagine such a thing? Here are I and Chesty, sunk down in the ice water, while Hank Duvall and Hulda Kitzelmyer set on the edge of the troft and talk about what a grate man Hank is. All we have got out is our faces, while our bodies slowly freeze to death.

Hulda says, tell me all about baseball, because I love it. Hank says, it is a long story, but I will tell it to you. Bill, that ornery skunk started in telling her about what a grate guy he was, and how he burned up the Majer Leegs for years. Every word of it was a lie, because he never got out of the Western Leeg in his life, until he got this job with Smoke Tree.

Hulda says, tell me about umpires. My father says you are probably the best judge of umpires in the world and that is why we have got the two we have got. Hank says to her, my dear Hulda, I hate to brag, but I could of been a Majer Leeg umpire right now, except that my love is all for baseball, and I would never lower myself to ware a blew suit and become a object of pity and distrust.

Well, Bill, just as he said that, Chesty Jones, which is right under them, reached up, grabbed him by the belt and yanked him right backwards into the troft. A heel hit me right in the chin and I almost perished, but I got right out of that troft and I says, feer not, fare damsel, I will not hurt you, but I will have my pants or die. Well, Bill, I had no more than said it, when a fist hit me right in the nose, and I went into the troft again.

But I got out of there awful fast and

headed across the street, without any pants at all, while pandy moneum seemed to rain around the troft. I heard folks yelling, so I ran behind Kitzelmyer's store. It is awful dark back there, but I remembered a drane pipe which ran up past our window, and I climbed it like a munkey. I found the window all right and I got in. But like I have always said, it never ranes but it pours. I am not in my room. but in Kitzelmyer's apartments. You have to go through their dining room to get to the hall, and they are eating.

Well, Bill, you know that nothing ever daunts a Simpson. I come from a family of quick thinkers. I got my hands on a cloth on top of a table which I could use to cover my shame, but when I yanked it off, a lot of other things came with it. Mr. Kitzelmyer yelled, what is going on in there, and I ran for the window, but fell over a chair. I knocked a lot of skin off my knees, but just as I got to the window Mr. Kitzelmyer snapped on the lites. Mrs. Kitzelmyer yelled, Police, help, murder, robbers!

Bill, I did not wait to feel around for that drane pipe, and as a result I missed it and landed on top of a pile of paper boxes. Mr. Kitzelmyer must have had a shotgun, because there was a big explosion when I ducked around a shed. Bill, have you ever been naked in a strange town? It is a queer situation. I sneeked out to the street. There is a big crowd over by the troft, and I heard a man say, if we can catch the vandals we will hang them. I heard Hank Duvall say, I do not know what they looked like. but they are desperate men. A man was running across the street to them, and it is Mr. Kitzelmyer. He says, burglars have tried to ramshack my home, men! I think he was waring black tites. I shot at him and I feel he is mortally wounded.

Bill, I says to myself, well, I have found out one thing and that is the fact that Mr. Kitzelmyer is color blind. Well, I went back to that pile of paper boxes, and I got one that fit me pretty good, with both ends knocked out. Then I sneeked around and got into our room, while everybody is looking for the burglar in black tites.

Chesty is setting on our bed in the dark, waring a old horse blanket. He has got all of our clothes. I asked him what happened and he said let us light the lamp so we can be in bed, in case the posse comes up here. Well, Bill, I lit that lamp, and I give you my word, Chesty is as dark complected as Joe Lewis. I says, my God, what happened to you? He says, you ought to see yourself.

Well, Bill, I looked in the mirror and my face is as blew as my uniform. I says, Chesty, it must have been the ice water. He says, do you remember when I pulled Hank Duvall into the troft, and I says, yes, what about it?

He says, nothing much, except that I got the woman instead of Hank. I says, Heavens, did you dunk Hulda? He says, well, if that was Hulda, she sure went into the troft. Chesty says, the stable boy told me that somebody put a quart of ink in that troft, but he don't know who.

Well, Bill, we had a bucket of water in the room and we managed to get most of the ink off our heads and hands. The rest will wear off in time, I think. Anyway, we went to bed and we have been there about an hour, when somebody knocked on our door. It was a boy with a telegram from Mr. Greenbaum, which is the pres of our leeg. It says that we are to go at once to Scorpion Bend to open the seeries tomorrow.

Well, Bill, that put us up against it for fare. But orders are orders to a Simpson. I and Chesty dressed and went down to the garage to see about our Model T. But it is closed at that time of night. Chesty picked the lock with a button hook and we went in. They have turned the body around on our Model T, which was as agreed. Chesty says, we might as well pull out, because it is two hundred miles to Scorpion Bend.

Well, Bill, I got in, while Chesty cranked her. I do not know what happened, except the reverse was stuck and would not budge, and we went backwards through the wall, which took the top off, because it was not yet bolted on, and I went off with it. But that chazzy kept right on going off across lots, and the last we heard of it the thing must

have hit a house, because there was a awful crash.

Well, Bill, I and Chesty was so disgusted that we locked the garage, went back to our room and went to bed. I said, well, I hate to disappoint Mr. Greenbaum, but we can not get to Scorpion Bend in time for a ball game, so we will work this game here. I found that telegram in one of my pockets and we looked at it again. Chesty says, that is a fake telegram, and I will bet Hank Duvall wrote it, because that is not Mr. Greenbaum's signature. Chesty is awful smart, Bill, except, as I say, when he has one of his periods.

Well, Bill, the next morning early the sheriff came to see us. He is a grate big man. He says, do you two own a Model T car which is in Kelly's garage? I says, we do, sir. He says, you do not. I says, what do you mean, and he says, it is not in Kelly's garage because it broke out of there during the night and is now half way into Slim Allen's home. He says, that is, the chazzie is, but the top did not go along.

Chesty says, wonders will never cease. What happened, officer? The sheriff says, well, we can not figure it out, because the door was locked. I says, Officer, have you considered spontaneous combustion? He says, I haven't considered anything except what was left in the gas tank, which was pure benzine, and it is a wonder the whole thing did not blow up. I says, Slim Allen is the mgr of the ball club, is he not? And the sheriff says, yes he is, and he has found out that the chazzie belongs to two umpires.

Bill, I says to him, well, how is tricks; Officer? And he says, if you mean dirty tricks, they are plentiful. Last night two men took Hulda Kitzelmyer from Hank Duvall and almost drowned her in the watering troft in which was a lot of black ink and ice. They escaped. Then one of them tried to burgle Mr. Kitzelmeyer's home, but escaped. Then your car decided to pull out backwards and go over and live with Slim Allen.

Then he says, where were you last night? I says, we were home and in bed, and he says, well, I guess I will be going. Bill, that sheriff has an evil eye. I saw

Mortimer Lefty Simpson

him lean over and look at Chesty's left ear, which is still a little black, and he has got a rim of black around the back of his neck. We have no fear of anything, because we are as innocent as possible, but we hate to be suspected characters. Well, Bill, we must get some nourishment before game time, which is two o'clock. I will finish this letter after the game. There are no signs of the umpires which Mr. Greenbaum was to send to relief us, so I guess he realized we could not get to Scorpion Bend. Chesty is fixing up the mask with some baling wire, so I guess everything will be all right. More later. . .

Well, Bill, it is pretty late, but I will try and finish this letter. We had quite a ball game, if I do say it myself. They have not got a awful good ball park, but they are very seerius about the game. This was the first time the Smoke Tree team has been here this seesun, and it was just like a opening day, as far as the crowd was concerned. Even the Indians came and brought their pop pooses (children to you, Bill).

They had a parade, but I and Chesty did not parade, because most of our car is still in Slim Allen's house. A lawyer told me that Slim was going to soo us, because it was our car. I says, if you read up in your law books you will find that it must have been a act of God. He

says, that part is all right, but who cranked it? Ain't that like a lawyer, Bill. Always looking for a alibi.

Well, Bill, we all got out to the ball park after the parade, and the mayer made a speech. His name is Mr. Hipplewhite and he is a fat man. Then Mr. Hipplewhite was going to pitch the first ball to the sheriff. I am standing behind Mr. Hipplewhite, and Chesty is about half way to first base. Mr. Hipplewhite says to me, watch this one, because in 1880 I was a grate spit ball pitcher. Then he spit on the ball, wound up like a alarm clock and cut loose. Maybe there was too much spit, Bill, because that ball slipped and hit Chesty right between the eyes.

Bill, it knocked Chesty rite on the seet of his pants, but it did not knock him out. He got to his feet, picked up the ball, and he says, if that is the way you want to play, take a look at this one. Then he threw a curve ball at the mayer, who did not dodge, because he did not understand a curve. But the mayer did not get up.

Well, Bill, some of the mayer's friends wanted to lynch Chesty, who wasn't exactly wrong, except that he should have thrown a strait ball and let the mayer have a chance to dodge. But we got it smoothed over, and they took the mayer home. Hank Duvall and Slim Allen came up to the plate to talk over rules, and Slim Allen said it was the best curve he had seen in ages. He says to Chesty, you missed your calling. Chesty says, maybe I did, but I did not miss the mayer. Hank Duvall says, if you two ever get out of this town alive, you will be two added mirickles.

Slim Allen says, Mr. Duvall, these umpires are friends of mine, and if they are killed, I would spend my last dollar. Hank says, what for? And Slim says, flowers, you nut-head. I says, nobody is going to be killed, because you will see some of the best umpiring you have ever seen. And I says, in addition to that, the first brake either of you munkeys make toward I or Chesty, you will rue the day. We came here to run this game, and it will be run even if the Hevens fall. Hank Duvall says, listen, the first bad decision you make, my gang will run you out of town. Most all of Smoke Tree is over here, and they came heeled. I says, they did not have to because they are. Slim says, you tell him, Lefty, but do not forget that this is Paradise Flats, and we ain't won but one game this seesin.

Well, Bill, we finely got that game started, but in all my life I have never seen such wild pitchers as they have in this leeg. Paradise Flats have a fire-ball pitcher, who does not know where is the plate. His first three pitches went into the stands, and the catcher says, you ought to bare down, because one of them got a corner. I says, yes, a corner of the stand, but the other two hit it dead center. Slim Allen comes out and he says, hey, Lefty, that kind of umpiring puts my pitcher in a hole. I says, you better put the catcher on top of the stands, or you will run out of balls in the first inning.

Bill, the next pitch was six feet over my head and I heard something go clunk after it went through the screen. The catcher says, they're carrying Mr. Kitzelmyer out, so I guess he got clunked. I says, imagine this! A opening seeries in Paradise Flats, and both the mayer and the owner of the club are absent.

Well, Bill, after that catcher walked in two runs, they took him out, and he cursed me. Can you imagine that. I said, go sware at your father for being the responsible party for you being on earth. Well, Bill, they finely got two out, when up comes a husky young appil knocker, and he hit the tallest fly I ever seen. It was a regular rane-maker. Well, the wind was blowing and every man on the in field was after that fly. It looked real funny for six men, all in a tite groop, trying to get under that ball, and poor Chesty was in the middil, like a chip in a whirlpool. Well, the ball came down in the midst of the groop, and nearly every one of them fellers fell sprawling.

Bill, by that time, every man had scored. Nobody caught the ball and nobody knows where it is at. Slim Allen is fit to be tide. There was so much dust and confusion that nobody could find the ball. That made six runs. A lot of folks came out to hold a re union with

Chesty, while I tried to prove to Slim Allen that you don't just get one base on a lost ball.

Chesty came down to us and he says, what's all the confusion? I says, we have lost the ball. And Chesty says, well if we are short on balls we can use this one. So he took one out of his pocket and gave it to me. Slim yells, where did you get that ball? Chesty says, well, I found it out there, after all them players fell on me.

Bill, I like Chesty. He is as fine a character as I have ever known and as honest as a dollar, but he does have periods. The argument started all over again, but this time Hank Duvall was in on it, because I ruled that only two runs scored. Slim says, well, let us play it over again, I says, that is fare. Hank blew his cork, but I was firm. We sent the runners back to their bases, and that big, harry appil knocker hit that first pitch so far that it would take a pack outfit and a surveyor two weeks to ever find that ball again.

Slim Allen is bumping against me and yelling, fowl ball! Fowl ball! I says, shut up you idiot, that ball was inside the flag. He says, use your eyes, you lunkhead! Some Injun stole that flag and he's got it out there, twenty feet from the base line. Bill, do you have any rule on a think like that, or do you not have any Indians to content with.

I says, the rule says that anything inside that flag is a home run, and it don't say that you can not have an Indian under the flag, so the home run stands. Bill, some of those folks were so mad at the Indian that they took a shot at him and almost hit me. But I finely got things calmed down again, but I do not look so good, because Slim Allen yanked my shirt out of my pants, tore it up the back and almost choked me to death because my necktie won't bust. All I have got left is my collar. I threw Slim out of the game, but he came back and he says, Lefty, I am the only mgr this team has got, and if I have to leave the game they will be non plussed. He says, if you will let me stay I will see about another shirt.

Hank Duvall came running out and he says, what is this munkey trying to pull, after he has been thrown out of the game? I says, he offered me a new shirt to let him stay. Hank says, I will take it up with the National Association and have you barred for life for trying to bribe an umpire. Well, Bill, Slim took a swing at Hank and Hank took a swing at Slim, and they both connected. One hit me in the eye and the other hit me on the chin, accidently, of course, but it hurt me.

So, Bill, I ordered them both out, and the crowed cheered. Chesty came in and he says, what is holding up the game. I says, it was just a tecknicality. So he went back. Bill, I still can use big words. At times I must amaze Chesty, who never went to school much, except the four years he spent in the third grade.

Well, Bill, everything went smooth, when they found out that I would not stand for munkey business. I was proud to see what I was doing. In two innings the Paradise team got six runs and tide up the old game. From then on it was nip and tuck. When we got to the ninth it was sixteen to seventeen, in favor of the Smoke Tree team. And by that time we had thrown out so many players that each team only had nine left.

Hank Duvall, which had no business out there, says, I content that every rule in the book has been broken and that my team has never even got one little piece. If this is the kind of umpiring we are to expect in this leeg, I might as well give myself up. I said, Mr. Duvall, I am glad. All these years I have wondered why you did not give yourself up, and I feel that I have done a grate faver to baseball if I have brought you to a decision you should have made before you ever put on a baseball glove.

Bill, I can sure tell them off in a polite manner, eh? Hank was so non plussed that he walked away. Well, that first batter got a fast one rite in his ribs. Then the pitcher lost control and walked two more, which filled the bases. The next batter hit a very tall in field fly. I am running around yelling, infield fly, batter is out. But the shortstop and the second basemen crashed together, and the ball hit Chesty on the head.

I ruled that the ball hit the umpire

and that it is a fare hit for the batter.

Bill, then the Smoke Tree team put up a good argument. They contented that a fast runner can easy score from second on a single, so I says, that is perfectly fare, so two runs score. I will bet that the Paradise club makes a lot of money out of their consessions, because there must have been a thousand empty bottils thrown on the field. One of them hit me below the belt from behind, and it certainly hurt. They wanted to pick up the bottils, but I said, let 'em lay.

Well, Bill, they got the next three men out, but the score is nineteen to sixteen in faver of Smoke Tree. They wanted to have me call the game on account of darkness, but I was firm. I said, I will give Paradise Flats a even brake, if we have to light lamps.

Well, the Smoke Tree pitcher got wild and walked a man. The next man buntid down the third base line and the pitcher and third baseman ran together, so they have two on and nobody down. The third baseman pulled a hidden ball trick, and when the man led off second base, he threw the ball so wide that it hit Chesty rite in the middil. As I have always said, Chesty is a fine man and will forgive most anything, but he must have thought the man hit him on purpose, because he picked up the ball and took after the third baseman. And just because there was no ball, both men scored. That made the score, nineteen to eighteen, and nobody is out.

Bill, I do not care where you have umpired, you have never seen such pandymonium. I was wrong when I said that nobody was out, because that third baseman was sure out. Chesty caught him and used the ball.

But I helt my ground, Bill, and dared them to find a rule to cover it. Somebody hit me in the nose and I swallowed my front bridge (false teeth to you, Bill). It stuck in my throat and choked me so bad that I dubbled up for a moment, which was unfortunate, because somebody kicked me awful hard, and it hurt very badly. Chesty got loose and came down to me. He says, what's all the trouble? I says, keep cool, Chesty, we do not want another debicle like we had in Smoke Tree. Well, he says, I sure debickled that third baseman, and they have only eight men left.

Well, Bill, I found that I am in no shape to work behind the plate, because I can not stoop down, so I asked Chesty to take the mask and let me umpire bases. Chesty says, what is wrong, indigestion? I says, well, maybe a little of it, but there are other complications. Well, they got two men out, but the next one trippled. With the tying run on third base, and two out, the situation is critical. In fact, it is intents.

It is pretty dark and most of the crowd is already on the field. Then the Paradise Flats decided to pull a squeeze play. Well, the first was a fowl that hit Chesty square in the mask and knocked him down. Chesty must have had a period, because he tried to make the batter take his base for hitting an umpire, but I over rulled him, and the crowd threw more bottils at me.

Then came the crucial moment. Bill. That batter dropped a bunt rite in front of the plate, and that wild eyed runner is coming in from third. But Old Chesty had been there many times before. He shoved the catcher out of the way, dived for that ball and blocked the runner. They was both knocked cold, but Chesty still had the ball and the runner was three feet short of the plate.

Slim Allen came galloping out, followed by the population. He says, you can't do it. Somebody bumped me where I am sore behind, and I got mad. I said, I rule the runner out and I base my ruling on the fact that any team is allowed nine men, and that is all they had.

Well, Bill, some time later they took us to see a doctor, but I recognized him as the man who hit me in the nose, and when he said, ah, yes, a simple case of amputation in both cases, I and Chesty got out of his office. I lost all my bridge work (false teeth to you, Bill) and a couple extras. Chesty almost lost his left ear, but a horse doctor at the livery stable sewed it on again. He says it will only show a little pucker.

Well, Bill, the sheriff attached our car, which is tuff on us. Then Mr. Green-

(Continued on page 129)

A hard-driven stone hummed, caught the gringo rustler in the temple.

SERMON *in* STONES

By FRED GIPSON

IT WAS sundown on Devil's River, watering time for the flock of Pulque Jesús. The scrawny little brown-skinned herdsman squatted on a gravel bar and watched the ewes and lambs drink at the water's edge, then turn and graze slowly up the short slope to the left toward the pole pens beside his camp under the live oaks. The escaped rear-end of his shirt tail waved languidly in the cool breeze drifting up the river.

Having drunk her fill, a high-headed, one-eared old ewe turned from the water and made off up the canyon bed, away from the flock and camp, walking resolutely, as if she had an appointment to keep. It was old Vagamundo, leader of the flock. Her black, half-grown lamb bleated at her tail. Two other ewes saw her leave and turned to follow.

Pulque Jesús reached for a water-polished stone at his feet and slipped it into

the pouch of the rawhide sling that ever hung by a loop from the third finger of his right hand.

"*Ai*, old foolish one!" he cried. "Where goest thou? To fill the belly of a hungry wolf?"

He caught up the other string of his sling, whirled it once above his head and let go.

The missile kicked up gravel a few inches in front of the old ewe's nose. She turned and looked inquiringly back over her shoulder. The other sheep stopped and looked, too.

"Back to the corral, old witch!" Pulque Jesús commanded, bitingly. "Must thou be forever going some other place?"

A second stone whizzed closer to her nose. The old ewe turned with the air of one shrugging off the whole matter and walked just as resolutely toward the pens. The others followed.

Pulque Jesús half rose out of his squat, casually dislocated a tick from the bend of one knee, sank back and cracked the parasite between his fingernails. His eyes never left the sheep. Pulque Jesús loved sheep. Sheep was all he knew. Sheep and *pulque*, that easy-drinking, soul-enriching, bowel-searing brew from the maguey plant.

When Pulque Jesús was with sheep, he loved sheep best. When he was with *pulque*, he got in jail.

The little herder's roving eyes halted at the sight of a plump cottontail that had ventured out of a buckeye thicket down the river bank a piece. Careful not to alarm the rabbit, he eased another stone into the pocket of his sling.

"*Pobrecito canejo*," he soothed. "Poor little rabbit. Thou art so small and the dangers about thee so many. Perhaps the cruel owl will sink its talons into thee this very night. Or some thieving coyote catch thee unaware. The bobcats prowl the river, too. All these terrors must make thy life miserable. Best that I end it all for thee."

The sling swished over his head. There was a flash of white furred belly as the cottontail's heels flew up. When the herdsman picked up his supper, the stone was half buried in the side of the rabbit's head.

HE carried the cottontail up to the corral and squatted down again to skin it out before rounding up the stragglers of his flock and lifting the bars into place behind them. Before he was half done, he received a blow in the seat of his pants that almost rooted his nose into the ground.

"*Madre de Dios!*" he shouted, whirling on his all-fours in time to catch Vagamundo's black lamb backing off for another charge. "Rogue! My little *borego negrito* is getting too big for such play. Thou drivest the tail bone of Pulque Jesús up between his shoulder blades!"

The pet lamb bleated and charged again, and Pulque Jesús caught him up in his arms and carried him to the pen, lifting the bars after him. A strong one, that little black *borego!* Holding down an extra ewe for him to suck when he was small had given him a good start. The *gringo jefe* would probably regret having given Pulque Jesús that big lamb, even if the evil spirits had turned its wool black.

The scuffle with the sheep had dirtied the rabbit somewhat, but nevertheless Pulque Jesús cooked and ate it with relish.

The purple night closed in. The fireflies, "God's little lanterns," streaked through the gloom of the canyon. The frogs set up an interminable chorus along the river bank. The wind sighed in the live oaks.

Pulque Jesús sat by the campfire and wished for a miracle in the form of a *pulque* bottle.

The miracle rode in out of the night, resting snugly in the saddle bags of one Paisano Morales.

Pulque Jesús was startled out of a half-sleep by the clatter of iron-shod hoofs just outside the circle of flickering firelight. A moment later, the handsome smiling Morales was swinging down from his saddle, followed by a cold-eyed, thick-lipped *gringo* who merely grunted when Morales presented him with a flourish as the "*Señor* Buck Jones."

The grace and friendliness of the smiling Morales, and the calculating

eyes of the *gringo* baffled Pulque Jesús. He was not accustomed to visitors. He got to his feet and stood stupidly, wondering what to say, at the same time wondering vaguely what Paisano Morales was doing on this side of the border.

"We bring thee a present, little one," Morales said, reaching into his saddle bags and withdrawing a long-necked bottle.

The little herder's eyes widened. He róse to the occasion.

"My house is thine," he said grandly, although there was not a house nearer than Del Rio, thirty miles to the south.

The three squatted by the campfire and passed the bottle around. They rolled and lighted brown-paper cigarettes.

"And old Juan?" began Morales, sociably. "Where is he?"

"Old Juan is dead," Pulque Jesús explained. "He lost the bag of holy sand from his neck last spring and when he sat down on a rattlesnake the next morning, it bit him and he died."

Pulque Jesús felt under his shirt for his Bull Durham sack of "holy sand." That sand had cost him a whole *peso* in Villa Acunia.

Morales clucked his tongue sadly. "Bad luck," he said. "Old Juan was a good man. Many times did he feed me when I was hungry."

"*Si*," said Pulque Jesús. "He fed me, too, when the *rurales* shot my mama and papa."

"Life is a gamble," reflected Morales.

THE two sat quietly for a moment out of respect for Old Juan, who had herded sheep over these same hills before Pulque Jesús. The thick-lipped Jones evidently could speak no Spanish. He sat and spat tobacco juice into the fire.

"We can only drink to his memory," said Morales, handing the bottle to the little herdsman. "After thee, my little one. Drink deep to the memory of old Juan."

Pulque Jesús tilted the bottle and did justice to the memory of their mutual benefactor. It was good of Paisano Morales to think kindly of old Juan, he reflected. It was good of him to stop by and pass the time of night with an ordinary sheepherder. In times past, when he had seen Morales drinking in the bars at Villa Acunia, or dressed grandly in a braided *charro* suit and making love to the *señoritas* on fiesta days, Pulque Jesús had stood in awe of him. The little herder had never thought to sit with him, as a friend, drinking out of the same bottle, just as though he, Pulque Jesús, were a grand *caballero* himself.

He took another long pull at the bottle. There were stories about Paisano Morales, it was true. But, then, there were so many stories about so many people. Paisano Morales had a kind heart. There was no doubt about that.

"The *gringo jefe*," Morales interrupted. "Does he visit often in thy camp?"

Pulque Jesús shook his head. "Sometimes the month passes and I do not see his face. He brought *frijoles* and coffee the week past."

"Dost thou expect him again soon?"

"No."

"There must be times when thou art lonely," observed Morales, "with nothing but sheep to entertain thee."

Pulque Jesús had never thought about it before. But now two big tears welled up in his eyes at the thoughts of how lonely he was. He took another drink to hide his emotion.

"But thou hast *pulque* this night," Morales pointed out, with a lift to his voice. "No man can be lonely with friends and *pulque*."

Pulque Jesús' spirits rose again. He forgot to pass the bottle every time he took a drink. He rose and suggested singing "*La Cucaracha*." Morales kept the song going whenever Pulque Jesús stopped to take a drink. The canyon walls clamored with echoes as verse after verse of the bawdy song rose into the night. It was glorious. Pulque Jesús' joy was almost unbearable.

Jones watched them, without a change of expression in his eyes. He continued to spit tobacco juice into the fire.

When the staggering little herdsman finally stumbled and fell across the sheepskin he used for a pallet, and failed to rise, Morales nodded to his partner.

"'*Sta bueno*," he smiled and led off to the corral and let down the bars.

ANOTHER blow in the seat of his pants awoke Pulque Jesús. It took a second one to jar his eyes open. And immediately he shut them again. The sun, already high over the ridge, blinded him and set a thousand little devils with hammers to work inside his head, tapping viciously at the walls of his skull. A moment's respite, then a bucket of cold spring water sloshed into his face brought him out of it.

"You d a m n e d drunken *pelado!* Where's them sheep?"

It was the voice of the *gringo jefe.* Groggy as he was, Pulque Jesús sat up and tried to focus his eyes. He could count twelve faces of the *jefe* floating before him, and all of them expressed extreme displeasure. He did not know which one to try to placate, so he groaned and slumped to the ground again.

He received another blow in the seat of the pants, much harder than the little black *borego* had ever butted him. As he passed completely out again, his ear drums attempted to register the tremor of rapidly fading hoofbeats on the ground.

It took another hour for the hot sun to broil enough alcohol fumes out of his black head for his brain to function again. Bleary-eyed and dizzy, he rose and staggered to the cold spring that bubbled out from under the cliff beside his camp. He washed his face, gulped the cold water down his parched throat. Finally, he sat up to take account of himself.

Hazily, he recalled something of the *gringo jefe's* visit, but he discounted it as a bad dream. He wondered vaguely when Paisano Morales and the *Señor* Buck Jones had left last night. Too bad that he, Pulque Jesús, could not hold his liquor better. He hoped that his own over-indulgence had not offended his visitor and new friend.

Careful not to jar his aching head unduly, the little herder strolled off down to the corral to turn out his flock.

But he found no flock! The bars were down, the corral empty!

For a time, his foggy brain refused to absorb this fact. The sheep were always in the corral in the mornings and had to be turned out. Who had let them out this morning? Maybe the *gringo jefe* had been here, after all, and turned out the sheep.

His gaze traveled up the slope of the ridge to the east. No sheep grazed among the *lecheguilla* stalks. No *jefe* was in sight.

Suddenly, he became frantic. Where was the little black *borego,* his sheep? Where was old Vagamundo?

Ai! That was it. Old Vagamundo. She was the guilty one. The evil spirits had visited her again and she had let down the bars and led the sheep astray.

Pulque Jesús started in a trot for the first ridgetop. But the pace was too much for his pounding head. He slowed to a fast walk.

It was down the opposite slope of the first ridge that the little Mexican came upon the trail of the sheep, plain where hundreds of tiny hoofs had dirtied the dew-wet grass the night before. The trail led across the next ridge and the next. Pulque Jesús followed, calling upon the Virgin of the Guadalupe to condemn his flesh to the buzzards if he did not butcher the foolish Vagamundo that very night.

Noon came, and still the trail led on. His head throbbed. The sun burned down. His thirst for water became a torment. The hot, rocky soil burned through the automobile-tire *guaraches* that *slap-slapped* along on his feet. His shins bled from the thorns of the dragging catclaws. His ragged trouser legs bristled with prickly pear spines that pinned them to the flesh underneath.

HE FOUND a pool of greenish water in a deep arroyo and stopped to drink and pull some of the spines out of his legs. But only for a little while did he rest. Then he was up and dragging his weary body along the trail again.

Occasionally, he noticed horse tracks in the trail dust, but he did not bother about what they might mean.

In the heat of the afternoon sun, the distant brush-covered ridges began to quiver. It made him more dizzy than ever to watch ahead for his sheep. He

stopped looking beyond and traveled at a jog trot, watching the trail only a few feet ahead. From time to time, he moaned *"Pobrecitos míos. Pobrecitos míos!"*

Sundown came, then night. And still the little herder tried to follow the trail by the sound of his feet on the trampled earth. When he finally was certain that he had lost it, he plodded on for hours in the direction he had traveled all day. Toward midnight, exhaustion overcame him, and he crossed himself and lay down in a bed of wild persimmon leaves between two great boulders.

"God's light," that first pale morning glow that precedes the actual dawn, awoke Pulque Jesús. He started up, sore and shivering. He stared wildly about in the darkness for a moment, groping for an explanation of his whereabouts. A fox barked from across the ridge. A mockingbird awoke in a nearby cedar and trilled a few tentative bars, then gave it up and drowsed again. Somewhere a sheep bleated, sleepily. Then Pulque Jesús remembered.

He came to his feet. Below him, the rugged terrain dropped away into the darkness, then lifted out on the other side. He could make out the tall straight *lecheguilla* stalks against the half-light in the east.

Again a sheep bleated. The sound came from down in the gloom of the canyon below him. Pulque Jesús picked his way down over the limestone benches into the darkness toward the sound.

Daybreak was at hand when he discovered the sheep, bedded down in the head of a rock-walled box canyon that widened further down to encompass a dense mesquite thicket.

Old Vagamundo got to her feet and bleated him a greeting, then walked past him toward the mesquites. The little black *borego* bleated at her side. Every sheep in the flock rose and followed. The lambs did not play like rested lambs should. They humped their backs and bleated plaintively. Their feet were sore from too much travel.

"Daughter of Satan!" Pulque Jesús cried at the lead sheep. "Always, thou must follow the devil. Lead the poor sheep to the wolves. Walk them to death. May the screw worms eat out thine other ear and half thy head. May thy hoofs rot off to the bone!"

Past the edge of the mesquites, Pulque Jesús whirled his sling and whizzed a rock in front of old Vagamundo, turning her up the rock-bench slope.

An instant later a loop settled around his shoulders and jerked him over backward. His head struck a rock. A painful light flashed through his brain. Darkness followed.

WHEN he came to again, Pulque Jesús lay beside a campfire in the mesquites. The *gringo jefe*, hands bound and a red bandana handkerchief tied across his mouth, sat propped against a mesquite. Paisano Morales squatted over a frying pan at the fire. The *Señor* Buck Jones, mounted on a horse, was driving the sheep back down the slope.

The little herder groaned and sat up. Morales turned.

"*Ai*, my little thief awakens, at last," he said, then shook his head sadly. "One never knows about friends. One night a friend drinks with him. Another morning that friend tries to steal away with his sheep while he sleeps. So little is friendship valued these evil days."

The eyes of Pulque Jesús widened. "Thy sheep!" he protested. "But they are my sheep. I herd them for the *jefe*."

"No, no, no!" Morales denied. "They belong to Paisano Morales and the *Señor* Buck Jones. We buy them. Only yesterday. Ask of the *gringo jefe*."

Pulque Jesús looked imploringly to his employer for explanation. With the bandana in his mouth, the *jefe* could only stare back. Wrinkles of perplexity gathered in the forehead of Pulque Jesús. There were things here he did not understand.

Jones herded the sheep back into the mesquites around the campfire.

"Got it ready to eat?" he asked of Morales.

"*Un momento*."

Morales set the pan of bacon aside and reached for the coffeepot. A charging black lamb hit him in the rump, knocked him across the fire, upsetting the coffeepot.

Morales screamed in pain. He leaped up out of the boiling white smoke and ashes, slapping his burned hands against his legs.

The *Señor* Buck Jones guffawed.

Morales whirled in anger, grabbed up the overturned pot and flung it at the lamb, missing it and knocking old Vagamundo's legs from under her. She bleated, struggled to her feet and hobbled away, carrying one hind leg.

Sudden anger flared in Pulque Jesús. He struggled with his bonds. Then he stopped and sat back quietly. But a strange fierce light burned in his once soft eyes.

"It is that thou knowest not the nature of sheep," he said presently to the disgruntled Morales. "Best that Jesús herd thy new flock. He knows their ways. They know his."

Morales stared at him a moment, then his face brightened. "'*Sta bueno*. Thou drivest them for us."

He explained in English to Jones. The hard-eyed man studied the face of Pulque Jesús a moment, then grunted assent.

"I'll have a gun handy, just in case," he said, significantly.

Morales shrugged. "He the crazee one," he said in English. "He theenka we buy sheeps!" He grinned.

IF PULQUE JESÚS understood a word of what was said, his face did not indicate it. He smiled blandly when his hands were freed and strode out to the sheep, eager to take them in hand.

"We go to the south, toward the Rio Grande, today," Morales instructed him in Spanish. "Start them down the canyon. Then we shall break our fast."

Old Vagamundo, still limping, had started up the side of the hill again. A rock from Pulque Jesús' sling turned her back toward the camp. The sheep fell in behind her. Pulque Jesús eased toward a tiny clearing that led away from camp. He needed just a little more distance.

As the flock trailed by the camp, some crowding close, the *Señor* Buck Jones reached for a dead mesquite chunk and whirled it at the sheep to turn them. The club struck the little black *borego* a cruel blow at the back of his head. His heels flew up.

The restraint of Pulque Jesús broke. "Dogs of dogs of dogs!" he screamed. His sling whirled viciously. A hard-driven stone hummed, caught the *gringo* rustler in the temple, crushed the skull and stuck there. The man pitched forward, quivering like a pole-axed steer.

"*Sangre de Cristo!*" gasped Morales, snatching at the gun at his hip.

"Lizard's belly!" raged the infuriated Pulque Jesús and whipped his sling over his head again.

A jagged stone drove the right eyeball of Paisano Morales back into his head. His gun crashed as he fell, the bullet knocking a heel from one boot of the startled *jefe*.

Pulque Jesús rushed to the fallen black lamb, pulled it up into his lap and sat rocking and murmuring, "*Probrecito mío! Pobrecito mío!*" Not until the stunned lamb revived, did Pulque Jesús put it down to untie the amazed *jefe*.

The boss sputtered, looking at Pulque Jesús, partly in awe, partly in fear.

"Damn! Never saw anything like it," he exclaimed. "Killed 'em both dead'ern butchered yearlings. With a damn sling. And them with guns, too!"

Pulque Jesús shrugged. "They hurt my sheep," he said simply.

The *jefe* stared at him, then back at the dead sheep thieves, still hardly able to credit his eyes.

Finally, he said: "That Morales. He's worth a thousand dollars. Wanted down at Eagle Pass for sheep-stealing. You'll get it all, too, Pulque Jesús, damn your little brown hide. They was aiming to make catfish bait out of me when they reached the Rio Grande.

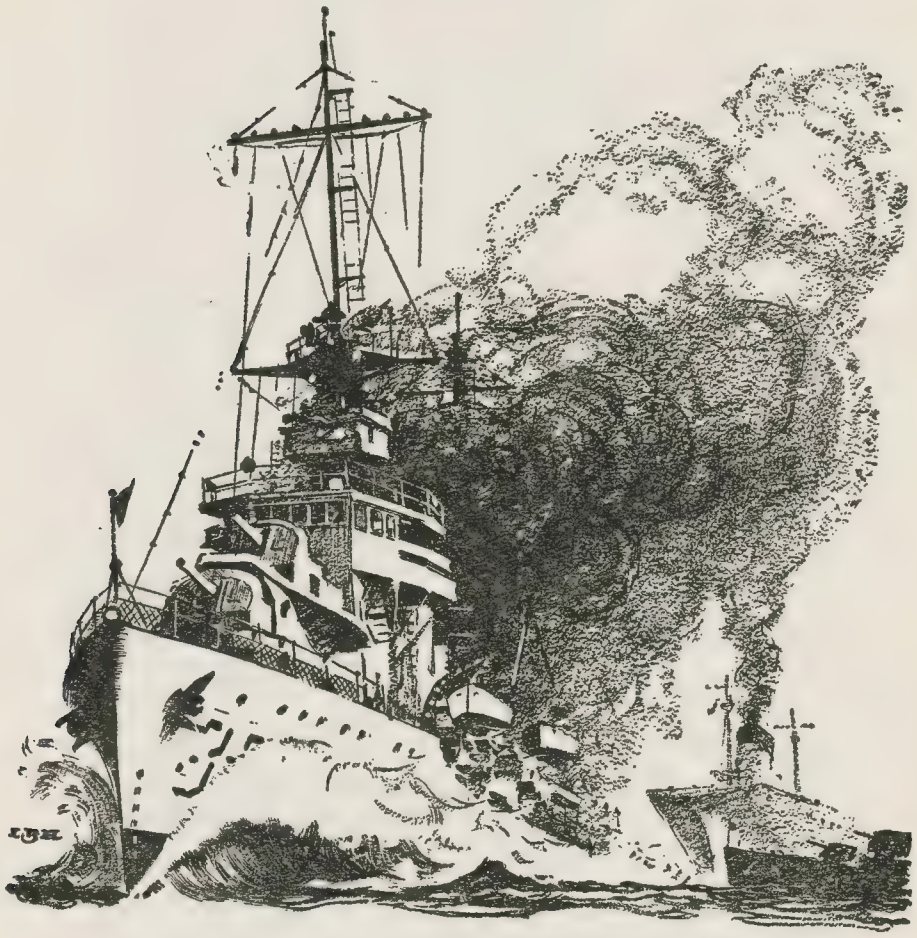
"T'ousan dol-lar," Pulque Jesús mused.

Why, he could get drunk a thousand times on that much, maybe more, if he shopped carefully. He grinned delightedly. It was good to have his sheep back and the promise of so much *pulque*. He swung his sling, sent a rock whizzing in front of Vagamundo.

"*Ai*, old foolish one!" he shouted. "Old witch! Must thou ever be wandering away?"

OBSOLETE EQUIPMENT

By HOFFMAN BIRNEY



TO BART SULLY, radioman first-class, United States Navy, his wife's little snobberies seemed quite harmless now. Alacran Island was a tiny dot of dark lava on the blue Caribbean and a long way from Hyattstown, Long Island. Ann, bless her, was loyal. She hadn't hit the roof the way some women would have done when he told her he was retiring as president of Tropical Imports to join the Navy and go—alone—to a Caribbean Island so small that you couldn't find it on most maps. She'd nodded gravely when he explained that there would be no change in income and that the children—Jimmy was fourteen and Lucille eleven—would not have to leave the expensive private schools they were attending.

"I'm glad of that, Bart," she had said. "It isn't as though we were at war, and you were needed. After all, an officer's pay—"

That was when he had told her that he'd be an enlisted man and that his monthly pay would about equal their usual fuel bill for the same period. Ann had shuddered. She considered enlisted status a terrific comedown for a man who'd been a captain of Air Service in the last war, even if he hadn't gone overseas, and she had trained the children to say that daddy was engaged in confidential work for the government; a result of his gift to the Navy of the short-wave station he'd built on the second floor of the garage. All that didn't worry Bart a bit. He was too happy to be in the service, any service, to care.

In that moment Bart Sully saw the propeller was standing motionless.

Like half a million other Americans who were pushing middle age, Bart had thought that the War Department was eager to obtain experienced men and when the military expansion program was announced he'd asked for an Air Corps captaincy and for assignment to duty as a supply officer or adjutant or communications officer, admitting that perhaps he was a bit too old for active flying service. Hearing nothing from that application he'd gone to Washington and learned there that a man of forty-seven, with bifocal glasses and a bit of blood-pressure and considerable bridgework was as obsolete as the Jenny-Hissos and Thomas-Morses and D H-4s he'd once flown.

Bart had been rather proud of the eight hundred hours of flying time he'd accumulated during 1917 and '18; in Washington he met lieutenants who had logged as many thousand. The uniform had changed, tables of organization had changed, drill regulations had changed. The War Department had no more use for Bart Sully than it had for an OX-5 motor—and none of the officers with whom he talked could see that the realization nearly broke his heart.

The Navy had given him his chance. The Navy had been very grateful for the gift of the station which he'd developed almost to the status of a laboratory and Bart had many opportunities to talk with the Chief of Communications. That officer laid his fingertip on a chart of the Caribbean.

"Alacran Island," he said. "We need somebody there who can talk Spanish—you can—and it's not a job for a youngster. An older man, used to taking care of himself, won't mind the loneliness. The job will carry a rating and if you really want to get in the show we can arrange to waive such things as your age and corrected vision."

Bart had accepted and had hoped that the officer hadn't noticed that he winced. A man of forty-seven wasn't really old and it wasn't fair to remark that assignment to Alacran Island was different from active service. Those things hurt, but he'd forgotten the words and their sting after he'd reached the island and fallen into the easy routine of his duties there. He was in the show, and that was what really counted. When it seemed that nothing had ever happened or could ever happen on Alacran, Bart told himself that he was just as much a Navy man as any four-striper on the bridge of a battle-wagon. He'd never see the fleet in those waters but he could listen to the air-borne voices of the big ships far out on the Atlantic and to the coded orders which passed from them to San Juan and Guantanamo and Panama.

There was other code, too. It came as abrupt interruptions to programs directed to Latin America from European stations. A voice would break in on the music or the alleged news and would repeat numbers or letters which might be meaningless but which could be code instructions to some agent in LaPaz or Valparaiso or Kansas City or Toronto.

Bart took down the stuff as it came and played with it in odd moments, trying to break down the code as a mixed cipher or to fit it to the key and text letters of a Vigenère Square which he made. They were always intriguing, those mysterious messages, even though he never did succeed in hitting on the key word and breaking one of them. Lonely? Life on Alacran couldn't be lonely while the station instruments brought the whole troubled world to the island.

ALACRAN means scorpion and the outline of the island greatly resembled that of the poisonous tropical arachnid. The tail was the long central ridge, tapering away to a sandspit, and the outstretched claws which embraced the harbor were secondary ridges of lava covered with banana palm and balisé and other growths. The station was just below the crest of the northern claw, overlooking the sea and the much smaller island—unnamed on even the largest charts—where the native village was located. The villagers were willing to visit the station, but always in daylight and by a steep trail which climbed the northern face of the ridge. There was another trail, cleared and graded by the construction crew which had built the station, but it descended to the harbor and for nearly three quarters of a century none of the inhabitants of Alacran had looked upon the landlocked bay.

Juan Bautista, headman of the village, explained to Bart Sully the sound reasons for that strict tabu. His people had once lived on Alacran. Their palm-thatched huts had been built on the southern shore of the harbor at the time a great ship had attempted to find a haven in the bay from a tropical hurricane. The year was 1867 and the ship was the *Loire*, luxury-liner of her day, bound from London and New Orleans for Trinidad. Juan Bautista did not know those details. His tale, handed down from father to son through four generations, was of how the ship's engines were powerless before the gale and how she had driven upon the rocks in the harbor mouth, split like a ripe melon, and gone down in the deep water. The dead, more than three hundred, had landed on the beach. . . .

"They came in ranks like soldiers, señor, marching swiftly in the lifebelts they wore, and so great was the wind and so high the tide that the march did not end until they were among our houses. They were buried by the crews of English boats which came from Trinidad and St. John seeking the lost vessel. The father of my father's father was a young man then, but he and his people did not help in that great burying. As soon as the wind had died they all left Alacran and none of us have ever returned."

They were friendly folk, Bautista and his fellows, and glad to work for Bart and supply him with fresh fish and vegetables so long as he did not pay them with anything so useless as money. They wanted machetes and knives, brass shells and black powder for their ancient shotguns, fishhooks and needles, and such luxuries as American cigarettes and candy. Bart, who hadn't smoked for fifteen years, found that cigarettes were the best exchange medium. He received them with his supplies every month and two cartons bought him a slim dugout which he kept at the foot of the trail on the harbor side, dragged well above high water mark and covered with banana leaves to protect it from rain and sun. When Bart spoke of the noise of the wind shrieking over the galvanized roof and rattling the steel shutters, it was Juan Bautista who showed him a cave in the lava a hundred yards from the station. Bart carried his cot, blankets, and Primus stove to the cave and abandoned the station entirely as living quarters.

Bart Sully, once head of an organization with branches and sub-agencies from Bahia Blanca to Monterrey, liked Juan Bautista and his fellows sincerely. They were an Hispano-Arawak-Carib-Negro mixture that would have baffled an ethnologist, and Bart found that he was as genuinely interested in their affairs and the state of their small crops of cassava and manioc and coffee as he once had been interested in Argentine politics or in hundred-ton shipments of chicle and balata and cinchona. Nothing

ever really happened on Alacran; it was a splendid place for the storage of such obsolete equipment as Bart Sully.

Only one white man before him had ever visited the island for any length of time. That had been nearly two years before, Bautista said, and the gringo had arrived in a sloop which had gone on and left him for nearly two weeks. He had a boat in which he rowed or sailed to all sections of the harbor and he had paid the islanders enormous prices for different kinds of fish—the fish which he never seemed able to catch on the lines he was forever dropping and pulling up again in the harbor and in the twisting channel between the tips of the scorpion's claws. A scientist, Bart thought. Scientists would go anywhere—like that fellow he'd met at Cuzco who'd been bored by Inca ruins but who had journeyed to the eastern Andes just to look for some sort of a primrose which grew nowhere else in the world. Bart dismissed the ichthyologist as he had the botanist. Nothing much had happened in Cuzco since Gonzalo Pizarro had been beheaded there in fifteen-hundred-something; with the exception of the sinking of the *Loire* nothing had ever happened on Alacran.

BART was aroused at dawn by the thumping of valve-gear on an ancient engine and the rattle of anchor chains as they ran out, bow and stern. From the crest of the ridge, above the cave where he slept, he saw an ancient and very shabby tramp steamer at anchor deep within the harbor. To outward appearances, the vessel was a typical Caribbean cargo-tramp, trading among the islands from Cozumel to Barbados—but the captain of any such vessel would have known that Alacran was uninhabited and would not have entered the harbor. It was odd, devilishly odd, Bart thought, and he returned to the cave for the field glasses which hung from a knob of lava. He'd take another look at that steamer before opening the station and reporting its presence.

It was when he regained the top of the ridge that he saw the men, already close to the head of the trail. There were four of them—and certainly they were not seamen from any tramp which had ever sailed on any sea. They wore dark gray uniforms with scarlet piping at the collars and a single red chevron on each sleeve, and round, brimless caps with some regimental badge or corps insignia pinned to the bands. The leader wore a pistol and the three who followed him carried short, ugly, automatic rifles. They marched straight to the station and read the notice which Bart—since he closed the place each night—had permitted to remain on the door:

ESTACIÓN CERRADA

ENTRAR SE PROHIBE.

The leader read the sign, then put his ear to the door and listened to the SA, SA, SA which the automatic set broadcast continually as a signal on which navigators of air and surface craft within a hundred miles could take cross-bearings on the island. He raised his head and studied the wind-driven generator as though satisfying himself that the setup was one which could function without attention. The sun cast a yellow light

They marched straight to the station and read the sign.

on a flat, pale face and cruel blue eyes. At last he spoke a word of command and one of the others took a hammer and cold chisel from a bag of tools he carried and battered at the lock until the hasp yielded.

"They don't know I'm here," said Bart Sully to himself, "or they'd have looked for me first and then broken in. Whoever they are, they mean business—and what am I going to do about it?"

He crouched among the broad leaves of the banana palms as the four opened the steel shutters. Their mission was not one of destruction for the commander sat down in the operator's chair, studied the instruments, and then cut in the switch. He made no attempt to send, merely listening to whatever signals were riding the air-waves. His companions searched the station, opened cans from Bart's storeroom, and gave one to the sergeant, as Bart judged their commander's rank to be. After listening for some time the sergeant spoke a command and two of the men left the building and filed down the trail.

"Two from four leaves two. A real hero would dope out how to put them out of the picture and send a warning before the others could get back up here. I guess I'm not a hero. I haven't got a gun and I'm forty-seven years old and I'm soft. They're armed and they're not more than half my age and they're hard as nails. I've got to do something, though. Some sort of hell is cooking and I'm the only one who can stop it."

He crawled back along the trail to his cave, then climbed to the crest of the ridge. A second group of men was in evidence now, far busier than the first. The cargo-boom of the steamer was lowering to the harbor surface the fuselage of a seaplane fighter, water-borne by a single shovel-nosed pontoon that was an integral part of the short body. A whaleboat towed the fuselage to the beach, then returned for the wings. Mechanics proceeded immediately with the task of attaching the wings to the beached plane. There were no bosses to shout instructions. Each man knew his job and went about it swiftly and efficiently.

"They came here on purpose. They knew they'd find a good harbor here and that there weren't any natives to bother them. The villagers have seen planes before, anyhow, and they'll fall for any story these fellows give them if they happen to see them. For all I know, this gang is posing as a Trans-Caribbean Airways outfit."

Gasoline drums were taken ashore and the assembled plane was fueled. The motor was started, stopped for sundry adjustments, then started again and allowed to warm up. The whaleboat brought from the steamer a young officer in helmet and goggles who climbed carefully into the cockpit and—after a time—took off for what proved to be a test flight. Over the sea, beyond the harbor mouth, he tried out his machine guns. Bart could hear the ripping bursts and the sound of heavier reports.

"That's a cannon firing through the propeller hub—our fighters have them too. I wish I could dope out the game. A pursuit job like that couldn't carry gas enough to get to any place important—like Aruba or the Canal. He could shoot down a clipper—but why? They wouldn't go to all this trouble just to kill off the passengers in a commercial transport."

The plane returned to the harbor and was refueled and towed to the eastern end of the beach. Through his field glasses Bart saw the mechanics transfer two large bombs from the whaleboat and fasten them in the racks beneath the lower wing. Within the hour—and this development greatly surprised the watcher—the steamer weighed anchor and departed. It left behind all of the younger, uniformed men—those who had taken over the radio station, the mechanics who had worked on the plane, the pilot, and another officer who seemed to be in command of them all. The plane lay at the water's edge, quite unconcealed. Bart Sully crawled slowly back to his cave where he tried to add those factors to an integral whole.

"They didn't run the neutrality blockade—not with those men and the plane aboard. There have been plenty of chances during the last few years to ship planes to South America from Europe and then install the guns. I'll bet

the men joined the ship at some mainland port and then the tramp lay offshore until the plane flew out and landed and got picked up. All the men are staying here—that means the steamer's going some place where they might be challenged. Maybe another boat's due to pick them up after they've finished their job. That'll be soon, that job, or they'd have hidden the plane instead of leaving it where it'd be sighted by any clipper or army plane that might take a notion to swing over the island. They've tested the plane and they're satisfied or they wouldn't have loaded the bombs. That means they're ready and that the job will be pulled tomorrow. I've got tonight to throw a monkey wrench in the works—but how?"

BART had never attempted to descend the trail after nightfall but the journey was less difficult that he had anticipated for the vegetation on either side of the path warned him as soon as his feet strayed. Those men who had occupied the station had not noticed—certainly they had not disturbed—his dugout under its covering of broad leaves. When he shoved it off the narrow strip of beach a large fish darted into deeper water at the point of an arrow of greenish silver flame.

"That's bad and it's good. I can't paddle straight across now because no fish makes a regular swirl every couple of seconds, but it's good because they've heard fish jumping and another splash of phosphorus in the water won't set 'em to shooting. I'm sure glad it's dark."

He paddled slowly, striving with each infrequent stroke of the blade to simulate the leap and run of surface-feeding fish. There was no moon and the brilliance of the tropical stars was masked by high cirrus clouds. The slim dugout was a black shadow on water that was as dark as pool of spilled oil.

Possibly Bart's thoughts should have been upon Ann and the children; he should have found chilly comfort in the fact that his interests in Tropical Imports would take care of them, no matter what happened. Possibly he should have thought of his brother Jim, for whom his son was named. Jim who had fallen in a night attack in October of 1918 and who had lain for more than twenty years at Romagnes with the other dead of the Meuse-Argonne. Where the tree falls, there let it lie forever, his parents had said—and then before the next generation had grown, the gray columns had rolled again over Romagnes and Chateau-Thierry and shellfire had smashed the monuments and torn the ground where lay the dead of the A. E. F. of 1918.

Bart thought of none of those things while he maintained what was little more than a slow drift toward the beached seaplane. He was trying to recall long-forgotten details of airplane construction and the location of vital spots. He was determined on crippling that craft, but to accomplish his purpose he had only a can-opener—the only article resembling a tool which he had been able to find in his cave.

He rejected each plan that came to his mind. He didn't smoke, hence had no matches and could not burn the plane. It would do no good to empty the fuel tanks or to tamper with the oil or the cooling compound. There were gauges for all those things on the instrument panel and no pilot would attempt a takeoff until after a thorough inspection. There was additional fuel and oil in the drums which lay on the beach. It would be the same if he tore the wires from the sparkplugs or altered the carburetor adjustment. He would delay matters only by the very brief time required to make repairs.

The plane's location had been determined by a gently shelving beach which permitted it to be brought to shore without injury to the thin skin of the pontoon, but there was no room there for tents and the men of the landing force were sleeping beneath canvas flies several hundred yards to the westward. Two sentries had been stationed—if one could apply that term to the men who sprawled on the dry sand more than twenty yards from the plane. Bart could hear their voices and see the bright coals of their cigarettes.

"They're pretty confident and as long as I don't make a sound I'll be O. K.

They won't shoot—not at their own plane."

The prow of the dugout touched the sand as noiselessly as a drifting leaf. The lower wing was directly over his head, a gray canopy in the darkness. There were bombs there—his searching fingers passed over the cylindrical surfaces and the sharp edges of the guiding vanes. Two big bombs, one on each wing, each gripped by clamping fingers of bronze.

"There's a release in the cockpit, of course—a solenoid switch of some sort, I guess. I'd never find it without a light and even if I did it wouldn't do any good to open it. This short a drop wouldn't explode 'em—so that's out." He caught his breath hoarsely. "Damn it. I've got to do something!"

He gripped the leading edge of the wing and felt in his pocket for the can-opener. It was gone. He searched frantically in the other pockets of his khaki shorts and his dark blue shirt. He found only a lead pencil, a soiled handkerchief, and four packs of chewing gum. He passed his hands over the interior of the canoe from bow to stern. Nothing. Nothing but a hank of unused twelve-thread fishing line and a broken fragment of clamshell. One of the sentries coughed and spat noisily.

"I've got do something!" Bart Sully repeated.

THE last thing Bart had expected was that he would witness the springing of the trap he had set. Dawn was still far away when he returned to the cave and he fell asleep almost as soon as his body touched the cot. The sky was rose-tinted when he woke and crawled to his post atop the ridge, but the invaders were already astir. He watched the man he had classified as commander climb the long trail and join the radio operator. Bart edged carefully to a position from which he could watch both the station and the harbor.

"They're waiting for a signal of some kind—maybe from that tramp steamer."

The sun was well above the eastern horizon before the awaited signal was received. Both men tensed, listened closely for no more than five seconds, and then the officer ran to the head of the trail and wig-wagged a message to those on the beach. The motor of the seaplane was started immediately and while it warmed the commander returned to his boat and was ferried across the harbor. Bart watched him through the glasses as he talked with the pilot. Both were young men, as young as Bart and Jim Sully had been in 1918, but their faces were grim, their eyes were cold, and their lips thin and cruel. In all the time he watched Bart saw neither smile.

"I didn't get across. I don't know what real war's like. I wonder if it made Jim look like that .... I wonder if little Jimmy, my son, could be made to look like that?"

The pilot squirmed into a quilted flying suit. Within a few seconds his face above the fur collar was red and dripping with sweat.

"He's going upstairs, way up, if he's wearing clothes like that in the tropics."

His companions carried the pilot through the shallow water to the plane and he climbed from their shoulders to the cockpit. Rudder, flippers and ailerons moved as he tested the controls. Then the motor's grumbling voice rose and he taxied across the harbor, turned into the wind, and shoved the throttle wide open. As he passed his companions, his hand and theirs rose in a straight-armed salute. Bart Sully watched until the silver-gray plane vanished in the thin cold air far above the scattered cloud islands. The commander and many of the men trudged to the crest of the opposite ridge, the scorpion's southern claw. Bart moved to a new location and covered his body with palm fronds. Those men, too, had field glasses.

HALF an hour passed before Bart saw the smoke on the horizon; another fifteen before the single smoke-smudge resolved into three and the superstructures of three vessels appeared. On the course they were holding they would pass fairly close to Alacran—and they were making good time. He changed by a hair the focus of his glasses and studied the approaching craft as they rose above the earth's curve. Two destroyers, as

slender as seasnakes, and—yes, the third vessel was an aircraft carrier. No other ship ever built by man had that lopsided silhouette, identifiable at the extreme limits of visibility.

Nothing happened. The carrier was not on maneuvers for as it drew closer Bart could see that the flight deck was clear and that there were no planes in the sky above. In these guarded waters, well within the neutrality zone, no protection other than the escorting destroyers was considered necessary. Even if planes had been aloft the attacking craft would be far above them.

"Oh, Lord, if I could only get to those instruments and flash a warning! I could damn near holler to them—they'll pass within five miles of the island."

The vessels were within that distance before the enemy pilot went into action. Vainglory coupled with supreme confidence must have impelled him to delay until his quarry was within view of his friends on the peak of Alacran. Then he struck—a silver-gray falcon in a terrific stoop upon its prey. He flattened out of the dive, pulled into a stall that held him motionless for half a second, and released his bombs. Even through the glasses, Bart could not see them leave the racks, but the object of the maneuver was obvious. The pulse in his ears pounded a question—when? when? when?—and then the sea to starboard of the carrier rose in a mighty column of green water capped with white foam. The bombs had missed their target by nearly a hundred yards—and Bart Sully bit his lips to keep from shouting in triumph.

He saw that both destroyers had opened fire—white shrapnel bursts that mushroomed above and below the twisting plane—but the pilot of the attack ship did not heed that danger. He flipped up the plane's tail and dove directly on the carrier. It was desperation carried to a suicidal degree to attack so large a vessel with weapons no heavier than machine guns and a 37-millimeter cannon —but the man possessed that measure of desperate courage.

Then, within what seemed an arm's length of the broad flight deck, the vertical dive flattened and the seaplane zoomed skyward. At the peak of the climb it turned in a slow, lazy, half-roll and in that moment Bart Sully saw that the propeller was standing motionless. Others must have seen it too, for the firing of the anti-aircraft guns ceased. The plane whirled from its inverted position and descended in wide spirals to make a fair dead-stick landing on the smooth water close to the carrier. The big vessel halted and a powerboat was swung over the side.

Bart heard the clatter of hard-soled boots on bare rock and turned to see the invaders of the radio station running down the trail. He raced for the post from which they had barred him and cut in on the frequency used by all the Caribbean stations. The air was quivering with signals. The carrier and destroyers were notifying San Juan, Guantanamo, and the Canal Zone and those stations were frantically demanding more details and identification of the attacker's nationality.

Bart cut through sharply and in undramatic dots and dashes told of the arrival of the tramp steamer and of all that had followed. He closed with the warning that a dozen or more men, armed with automatic rifles, remained on the island. Several minutes passed before he received orders from one of the destroyers. Its call letters identified the U. S. S. *Pritchett.*

"Captain Todd's compliments. Kindly stand by to come aboard in the tender he's sending for you."

"Compliments!" Bart chuckled as he replaced his soiled khaki with fresh white duck. "He'll have to take them back when I tell him that I'm just a radioman in his navy."

CAPTAIN TODD—his actual rank was that of lieutenant commander—glanced oddly at the man in civilian clothes who saluted the colors and the bridge, then advanced to shake hands. The destroyer was gathering speed as the powerboat was being swung inboard. Bart watched the other destroyer as it steamed slowly toward the harbor of Alacran. Planes from the carrier circled over the harbor and the southern ridge—broad-winged

birds of prey gathering for the kill.

"Sorry," said Todd, "but we'll have to miss the last act. Just as a matter of policy we're going away from here. We're neutral, you know, in a manner of speaking, and we'll stay that way even if it means missing all the fun—"

"Such as firing on that plane," Bart interrupted. "I was watching you from the ridge."

"But you didn't see us firing. Think again—you couldn't have seen us. We're not at war, you know."

"Of course," grinned Bart. He closed his eyes to shut out the sight of the crew swabbing out the ack-ack guns.

"We'll let the *Galatea* and the *Mowbray* run the show," Todd continued. "Our British cousins may be a bit slow at times, but they can be thorough, most remarkably thorough."

"They're British, then?" Bart followed the officer down the companionway.

"Yep. The carrier's the *Galatea*—bound from somewhere east of Suez to somewhere east of here as far as I can gather. She and the destroyer—H. M. S. *Mowbray*—came through the Canal night before last. We were at Cristobal and just happened to be going their way—on neutrality patrol, you know."

Again that word, spoken without a smile, and Bart forgot to mention that he was a radioman first class, U. S. N. At the moment he didn't feel like one. He felt like Barton H. Sully, president of Tropical Imports and a guest on a warship of his country. When Todd suggested coffee he remarked that something more substantial would be appreciated and a junior officer called a mess-boy and gave orders which produced the odor of frying bacon. All the officers were young men, much younger than Bart. They called him Mr. Sully and offered him cigarettes, and if they thought it strange that he should be radio operator on lonely Alacran they concealed their thoughts.

"Do you mind telling me what happened, Captain?" he asked over the last of the bacon and eggs. "Neither of the bombs hit, did they?"

"They missed by a hundred yards. As to what happened—that's what I'd like to ask you. The *Galatea* told me that every gun on that plane had blown up. If that was your work it was damned good."

"It worked, then!" Bart's voice was boyishly eager.

"Worked! They said the breech blew clear out of one gun and about scalped the pilot. If he'd been two inches taller it would have torn his head off. The cannon let go the same way and wrecked the motor and they're still wondering why he didn't come down in flames. I'll say it worked!"

"I hoped it would," said Bart Sully. "I saw a feller try to shoot a cleaning-rag out of a rifle once and it ripped the barrel wide open. I happened to think of that when it seemed there wasn't anything I could do to spoil that fellow's game."

"It was a good thought, Mr. Sully, but what in God's name did you use—concrete?"

"Chewing gum," said Bart Sully. "It was all I had. I chewed it and wadded it into the machine-gun barrels as far as I could stuff it with a pencil. For the cannon I used a dirty handkerchief and a big wad of gum on top of it."

"Chewing gum and a handkerchief—and we talk about billions for defense! How about the bombs—did you jam them with a hairpin?"

"No. All I had was some string— good unused fishing-line with a breaking strength of better than fifty pounds. I tied a piece around each bomb in front of the fins and then looped about six feet of cord back and forth and stuck it up underneath the fins with some gum. There were holes in the web of the bomb-clamps—put there to reduce weight, I guess—and I knotted the end of the line through one of the holes. I was working in the dark, but I didn't think it would show much and I took a chance they wouldn't make another inspection after testing the ship and guns the day before. The gum would pull loose as soon as the bombs dropped, but after they'd fallen six feet the line would check them for a second before it broke—hold them enough, I hoped, to throw them off the line of sight."

It didn't seem at all funny to him—he was thinking of the long hours of the night, of the need for absolute silence,

and of how long it had taken to saw through each length of line with the piece of clamshell—but Todd and the other officers were shouting with laughter as he ended the tale. That laughter told him that he'd made good in the eyes of these younger men. That a piece of obsolete equipment had—what was it the youngsters of today said?—had come through in the clutch.

THE destroyer commander leaned across the table and filled his coffee cup.

"Here's to you, Mr. Sully—glad to see you aboard. It's a damn shame we're a dry navy—this should be champagne!" He raised his cup and the other officers drank with him, lifting high the china cups with U. S. S. *Pritchett* on them in blue letters. Todd said: "If you were in the service you'd rate the Navy Cross for a stunt like that, Mr. Sully."

"But I am!" said Bart hastily, then blushed. "I mean—not what you said about the Cross, you know, but I am in the Navy. I was a captain of Air Service in '18 but when I tried to come back in this emergency they didn't seem to want me—too old, I guess. Then I had a long talk with Admiral Leach and he put me down here at Alacran. I'm a radioman first class, which makes my proper place forward instead of here in the wardroom."

"We're not overly formal in the destroyer service," said Todd. "You're in mufti and as long as you're aboard there'll be no question of rank. I've got to report this business, though, and damn me if I don't cite you for the Cross. There ought to be a change in your rating, too—warrant officer, at least."

Bart smiled happily. It was all over now and he was a bit tired. A warrant officer, he recalled, rated a salute from enlisted men. That would please Ann very much and he'd go home in uniform if and when he got a furlough. He wasn't particularly anxious for a furlough, however. What he really wanted was to get back to Alacran Island and find out just what had happened.

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WAGONS AWAY!

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

A TALE OF
THE WESTERN
TRAIL-BLAZERS

"Never heard of ye," growled the bearded man. "You galoots git on your way!"

FOR four long years the gold fever had tugged hard at young MORGAN WRIGHT. But the winter of 1852 found him still chained to the little New England town of Hadley, Mass., as assistant to the smith in the mill.

SILAS WRIGHT, his father, was reluctant to leave New England for the uncertainty of the great new West. Twenty years before, Morgan's uncle, ABNER WRIGHT, had gone west, and now they believed him dead. The only word they had had from him was a letter enclosing the deed to a ranch in California.

Then ONE-EYE POTTS came to town. Adventurer, hunter, gold prospector, guide—Potts was ready to go back west, after visiting his folks in Concord. He examined Abner Wright's deed, pronounced it a clear title to twelve hundred acres of land, and advised the Wrights to go west. At this crucial moment, came the layoff at the mill.

That settled it. And the Wright family—Morgan, his father, his mother FRANCES, his sister BETTY—made preparations to leave Hadley, in company with One-eye Potts.

By rail and stagecoach, they arrived at St. Louis. Potts then suggested that the family remain here while he and Morgan continue on to Independence to purchase supplies for the trek west. That night, Morgan was caught in the midst of a street brawl and his wallet, containing all the Wright funds—over $800—was stolen by a broken-nosed man who had been standing beside him. Morgan kept the loss secret and went on to Independence.

There Morgan saw again the man who had stolen his money. The town marshal broke up the ensuing fight and, after identification, returned the wallet to Morgan. The thief, a man named HACKENSACK, and his companion—who turned out to be FRANK BARNES, who came from Hadley—were run out of town. A rumor spread that they were members of the Nighthawk crew—a band of murderous outlaws.

In the recovered wallet, Morgan found not only his $800 but 400 more—and an IOU for $1000 from DAN GRISCOM, a prosperous trader.

That night, a horseman came by and told Morgan a man from Hadley was waiting to see him down by the storehouse. Morgan went there, to find himself ambushed by Hackensack and Barnes. When Hackensack shot at him and missed, Morgan pulled his own gun and killed Hackensack. Barnes had fled.

Morgan leapt on Hackensack's horse

and rode swiftly off toward the West.

After two days' hard riding, Morgan no longer feared pursuit. He decided to head for the mission station, locate Griscom and return his IOU. Perhaps he could go on to Kearny with the trader's outfit.

Not long after, Morgan met up with a bearded man who gave his name as WALTERS. Recognizing Concho, Hackensack's horse, Walters took Morgan for a Nighthawk—and revealing himself as one of that outlaw band, took Morgan to his camp where they found ARAPAHO SMITH, Walters' partner, and an Indian girl who had been lashed to a tree.

When Morgan discovered that the two men had killed the girl's father, he denounced them as murderers. Smith flung his knife at Morgan and Morgan shot him. Walters fled.

Untying the girl, Morgan learned her name was DIANE MORA. She was part Indian, part Spanish, part French. With her father, she had been on her way to the mission station to meet Dan Griscom when they were attacked by the two Nighthawks. Morgan and the girl rode on together.

They came upon a party of Tennessee Argonauts, who gave them shelter. Next morning they awoke to find themselves prisoners. Frank Barnes had arrived in the night with Walters and told the Argonauts that Morgan was wanted in Independence for murder and horse stealing.

That night Morgan boldly attempted to escape with Diane. They got away, but only after Morgan had been shot in the side by Walters. As they rode on, Morgan realized he was growing steadily weaker . . .

Morgan regained consciousness to find himself in the lodge of a friendly Sioux village, where Diane had brought him. She had nursed him through two weeks of delirium.

Realizing how much Diane had grown to mean to him, Morgan asked her to be his wife. She suggested they wait to talk until they reached Kearny. Just then they heard a chorus of yells. Two white men had appeared in the distance, riding toward the village.

PART III

DIANE, running, dashed out alone, passed the three incoming Sioux, and fell upon the two whites with eager, joyful cries. Morgan stared, unbelieving, as the first of them caught her up on his stirruped foot and kissed her, as she flung her arms about him. The second came up and shook her hand, grinning widely. Then they drew on, toward Morgan. The warriors were arranging themselves to welcome the newcomers with grave decorum.

Morgan stood up. The sudden sharp hurt within him lessened at Diane's beaming face. She jumped down, running again toward him, wildly excited. The first rider was a lean, brown-faced man, with black mustache over straight hard mouth, and glowing eyes beneath his hat-brim; an American, it seemed. The second man had a Latin cast.

"Morgan, Morgan!" Breathless, Diane came to him, and flung her arms about him, too, as she had the other. "It's wonderful! He's here himself, himself!"

"Who?" demanded Morgan, all astare.

"Cap'n Griscom! Dan Griscom! And here's Juan Vaca with him—a friend of my father's."

Against the afternoon sun, Morgan blinked at the two riders as they bulked above him. Griscom was smiling, reaching down to clasp hands.

"Can't wait to talk now," he said. "Damned glad to see you. Got to be polite; these Ogallalas are sticklers for formality, y'know. I'll be along presently."

Juan Vaca showed flashing white teeth, nodded amiably, and the two rode on toward the assembled warriors. Welcome was a ceremonious affair of speeches and pipes, it seemed.

LATER, with tumultuous hearts quieted, with greetings done, Griscom joined them and Juan Vaca flung himself down to listen. The trader had a peculiarly emotionless face, even when he smiled, yet wore always an alert and wary air; he was, as it were, impervious to emotions. His first words expressed this

Against the afternoon sun, Morgan blinked at Griscom bulking above him.

strangely callous attitude toward life.

"No, I didn't come after you," he said in response to Diane's query. "You're old enough to handle yourself; those that can't, got to go under. Gov'ment wanted me to palaver with some o' the Sioux chiefs. Building so many forts is making 'em uneasy. I got to go on up into the hills and see to it. Then I have some trading business of my own among 'em. I'll circle around through the Black Hills and come out t'other end, at Laramie. When these three bucks told me about a white girl here, I could guess who it was."

Swim or go under; this seemed largely his attitude toward others, thought Morgan. Yet, as the talk proceeded, he sensed a gathering storm within the man. Griscom was possessed of a deep and fiery energy, a terrific force of vitality that set him apart from other men, and when it was turned to anger, it was capable of anything.

Dan Griscom listened without a word of comment to all Morgan and Diane told of their journey hither. When Morgan took the folded I O U from his money-belt, Griscom accepted it and looked at it without a word. When he did speak, it was with a distrait and faraway air.

"Other side Laramie; that's where the big trouble's going to hit. Beyond the South Pass. Oregon trail goes north, California trail goes west to Hangtown, Mormon trail goes down to Bridger and Salt Lake. All sorts of new trails being broken to California. Wagons flooding out by thousands this year, spreading everywhere, easy prey for vultures. I thought it was none of my affair. Guess I'll change my mind now."

"Just what do you mean?" demanded Morgan. Griscom turned and eyed him as though seeing him for the first time, and nodded.

"Oh! I knew something had happened; didn't know what. Some men turned over my goods and animals at Fort Kearny, an hour before I left. My agent there has 'em now. Diane, I'm sorry about your father; you know that. I owe you two plenty; for this paper, too. Saved me a lot of money. Now, I'll tell you what to do. I've got to circle around and talk with these Sioux chiefs. The Ogallala chiefs; they're the most important, the oldest clan in the bunch. The Dacotahs aren't so important; they were taken into the tribe latest of all, a hundred years or more ago—"

He was staring hard, as he spoke, looking from Morgan to Diane and back again with an inquiring air; he seemed

to have lost his decision all of a sudden.

"You two get on all right, don't you?" he said abruptly.

Morgan smiled. "I guess so. Why?"

"That's good; either people do or else they don't, on the plains." Griscom looked at Diane, frowningly. "Delayed; that's too bad. I gave up looking for you. Didn't your father get a letter from me?"

She nodded. "Yes. He didn't say anything about it to me, except that we were to meet you at the Mission Station. We did try hard to get away, but one thing after another came up to delay us—"

"Oh, never mind, never mind," broke in Griscom. He seemed ill at ease, almost as though embarrassed. He went on talking almost mechanically. "Funny thing about the Ogallala. They've got some queer stories. About some of their chiefs going east, a long time ago, and fighting against the Hurons, east of the lakes. The wagon fight, they call it. You'd think they'd never heard of wagons; but they say the French in Canada had given some Hurons a wagon. This was while the French were still there, of course . . . Well, well, never mind all that. Now, you two folks had better keep right on to Kearny."

He paused, fished in the pockets of his leather shirt, and brought out the stub of a pencil. Crossing out the I O U, he turned the paper over and scribbled on its back, and handed it to Morgan.

"Here, Wright. Give this to my agent at Kearny; he'll outfit you with whatever you two folks need. No protests, now; don't waste wind." His manner was abrupt and imperative, brooking no interference. He went on quickly.

"Meet me at Laramie. Come on with your own wagons or others. You may get there ahead of me; if so, wait. Curse this gov'ment errand! It's going to make things mortal slow for me; still, I can use you, Wright. You're my man from now on."

"Don't jump too fast," said Morgan, nettled by the tone. "I'm nobody's man."

Griscom laughed, and Juan Vaca echoed the laugh softly.

"Don't get me wrong; my men are my friends and partners and part of me. Get rid of your clumsy greenhorn ways before reaching Laramie, and we'll go far together. Diane, we'll talk about your future at Laramie. I'm going out of the Santa Fe trade now; California's the thing, but we'll get you to Santa Fe somehow."

"If I want to go," Diane said softly. Griscom only nodded carelessly.

"We'll see. Wright, tell my Kearny agent to give you one of my own rifles, and pack another for me. I'll want it at Kearny. Can't carry one this trip. Juan and I are guests of the Sioux. Well, I guess that clears up everything."

"Your guess is wrong," said Morgan Wright. At Griscom's swift, direct look, he smiled. "Don't hurry too fast, Griscom. I've heard a lot about you, I've wanted to meet you, I'd like nothing better than to work for you if I can. But—you see, we don't know what all this is about!"

"Oh!" Griscom seemed to relax some inner tension. His face softened. "Well, things have happened to my wagons and to my animals. You've given me the first direct news of the trouble. You know some of the men who've caused it. This hitches up with what I've heard from the westward. There's no end of deviltry afoot, and it's got to be dealt with; these Nighthawks, as you call 'em, are scattered up and down the trail. They're not going to do much damage this side Laramie, where there are soldiers to deal with 'em; it's out the other side that they'll work. And my job, since they've stepped on my feet, is to give 'em their needin'. That's all. Understand now?"

"More or less," said Morgan. "But can you deal with them? What can you do?"

Juan Vaca laughed softly again. Griscom did not laugh. He rose and stood erect.

"You'll see. We'll discuss it later. At present, I've got the Sioux chiefs to think about. I'll get them soothed down and send some of their chiefs in to Kearny to talk with the officers, and all will be quiet."

"Well, I suppose we can talk about it after supper," said Morgan. "When are

you planning on leaving? Tomorrow?"

"Now," said Griscom. "Night travel, with a guide to the main winter village, then on and on. No time to waste."

Juan Vaca had silently risen and departed. Griscom put out his hand to Diane, clapped Morgan on the shoulder, and was gone, striding swiftly and lithely toward the pony-herd.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" exclaimed Morgan, staring after him, then looking at Diane. "Just like that. What kind of a man is he, anyhow?"

"Steel and fire, my father used to say," she rejoined, and leaped up. "I'll see them off . . . No, better not. He wouldn't like it." She checked herself. Her eyes were shining, her face was radiant, as she looked after the slim figure. "What a man he is! And he likes you, Morgan, he likes you! He never bothers with any man unless he likes him."

"Yes?" Morgan vented a scowling grunt. "Mighty uppity, I call him. What about me liking him? Not so sure about that."

His heart told him otherwise, however.

CHAPTER IX

FRIENDS FROM TENNESSEE

TEN miles out from Kearny, they came into the trail, of mid-afternoon. To Morgan, the sight was incredible, impossible! For here were wagons, following the ridge between the Little Blue and the Platte—an endless, solid mass of them stretching over the horizon. In reality, it was merely a jam that had thrown a dozen companies together for the moment, yet at first glance it seemed that this endless sea of wagons must run clear back to Independence.

Before reaching Kearny, indeed, the three of them were ahead of the jam, the Sioux guide skirting well around the line of wagons. Morgan longed for the ride's end; his new strength had run its course, and he was clinging to the saddle by sheer will-power. At last he drew rein.

"I'll have to take it easy," he said, and brought out Griscom's paper-talk. "Diane, ride on with our Injun friend, find Griscom's agent, and get whatever's necessary to repay our hospitality. I'll come along slowly and take my time. Guess I can't miss my way."

The Indian grunted something, and gestured.

"He says we'll sight the fort over the next rise," said Diane, and took the paper. "All right, partner; no hurry now. I'll have a bed ready for you when you get in."

"You've put me to bed for the last time," Morgan said, with a laugh. "Good luck!"

They rode on, and went over the rise with a hand-wave from Diane.

He waited, cruelly tempted to dismount and stretch out on the warm ground, but resisting. After a bit he sent Concho ahead at a walk; he was riding Indian fashion, with only a blanket under him, for to the Sioux this represented a saddle. Then, as he topped the rise and looked down at the bottoms of the Platte ahead, he stared with all his eyes.

The range of islands out in the mile-wide, shallow river was heavily timbered, but aside from these not a tree remained. The fort, a stockaded square of frame buildings and sod houses, was almost lost within a sea of white, that stretched on along the river bank for miles—the canvas covers of prairie schooners.

Kearny marked the first big leg of the overland journey, with the jumping off places three hundred miles behind. It also marked the end of all wooded country, with only buffalo chips for fuel ahead.

Here, then, the wagon trains halted to reorganize and repair for the sterner work coming. Trading posts and booths had far overflowed the little fort itself. The wagons were camped mostly in clumps, each company huddling together, while draft animals by the thousands were being herded over the landscape near and far in search of the new grass. A rain the previous day had halted all advance until the road ahead dried out; it followed the Platte, and the thick mud was almost impassable for wagons.

Wondering if the Macoupin Company and his own wagon were among the

mass, Morgan rode on slowly. He was inexpressibly weary, Diane and the Sioux were long since lost to sight, and as he neared the outer fringe of camped wagons the dull craving to stretch out and rest was almost irresistible.

The drooping, bedraggled, unshaven figure riding in alone on the splendid black, drew curious and suspicious eyes as it plodded toward the fort. His own lifeless gaze roamed about without interest, though in another mood he would have regarded the scene avidly.

Here were blue-coated soldiers, men in buckskin, men in plug hats and broadcloth, bustling women, peddlers and hawkers. There was no privacy in this city on wheels; men were drunk, quarreled, made love, labored, with scant heed to those around. Here was an old man laid out for burial, a missionary consoling the sobbing family around; a few paces farther on, an irate father was whaling his howling offspring with a strip of leather.

"We ain't so slow!" announced a man to others of his company, as Morgan passed. "By the fort tally, only twelve hundred wagons have went through so far this year! We're bang up in the lead, the lootenant says; the rush ain't good and started yet—"

Closer to the gates, an improvised animal market was being held. Oxen, horses and mules were being walked and examined, swaps were being made, money was changing hands. Some men were cutting down their teams, others were adding, a few were selling out entirely, animals, wagons and outfits. The clink of iron roused Morgan from his listless inattention; portable anvils were set up, men were hammering at tires and horseshoes beside an improvised common forge that served all.

He was looking at this group when a man halted him.

"Friend, do you want to sell that horse you're on?"

Morgan looked at the speaker and looked again; something stirred in him, he knew not what, for the man was an utter stranger. A huge, brawny man with black eyes, black hair and a bushy black beard cut in gallagher fashion, leaving his upper lip bare and framing his face; it gave him a severely puritanical and grimly uncompromising expression. His garb was of stained, worn broadcloth; but a bulge as of pistols under his long dark coat, and the heavy leg-moccasins he wore, bespoke the man of action.

"No," said Morgan briefly.

"Think well, friend," said the other. "I've gold to pay. Five hundred dollars cash down; a big man needs a big horse."

"I'm not selling," replied Morgan.

"Five hundred down, and five hundred at Laramie," said the other. "I'm well-known there and beyond, in the Mormon country. Or I can get hold of the money here, by tomorrow night. A thousand dollars. What say?"

A thousand dollars! Morgan almost choked on the very thought of it—more money than he had ever seen at one time!

"I'm too worn out to think about it now," he said, recoiling from the notion of selling Concho at any price, yet awed by the thought of such a sum. "Look me up tomorrow if you're in the same mind."

"Fair enough," came the reply. "Or you look me up. I'm Tom Herrick of Sacramento."

"What? From California?"

The other assented, unsmiling. "Aye. Having come this far east, I'm turning back to the golden west. A grand country, young man, a noble country! How are you called?"

"Me? Oh, Morgan Wright's my name. My folks are with the Macoupin County Company; do you know whether that company is here yet? We're Massachusetts folks and joined up with that company at Independence."

Herrick, staring hard at him, turned away. "I don't know," he flung over his shoulder. "If you want to sell, the price stands. Look me up tomorrow."

He went striding away, a strapping, powerful figure, and was lost to sight amid the wagons beyond, as though suddenly in a hurry.

MORGAN gazed after him, frowning. That striking face and figure plucked at the chords of memory in a vague way, yet he was quite certain he had not

known or seen Herrick before. Perhaps the man looked like someone he knew. That must be it, especially since Herrick was no easterner but was from California.

A thousand dollars! He gulped over this; it was fabulous, unreal, incredible. Herrick must want this horse very badly; still, Concho was a splendid and unusual animal. A friend. Friends are not sold. Morgan dismissed the whole matter then and there. His chief regret now was for the magnificent saddle he had lost, and the brass pistols. Where that rascal Hackensack had got them, or had got Concho, was impossible to know. One thing was certain: the Nighthawks all knew the horse.

The devil! Had this man Herrick recognized Concho, as the others had? Was this dark-visaged man from Sacramento one of the gang? The startling possibility gave Morgan a shock, for an instant; then it fled. This Herrick was well-known, by his own sayso. Must ask Griscom's agent about him.

As Morgan approached the fort gates, uneasiness and uncertainty returned upon him. Diane had argued him out of his first haunting fear lest his name be known far and wide as that of a wanted man, but the fear came back to him now. The abrupt disappearance of Herrick rather alarmed him. The man had changed completely on hearing his name. Those Tennessee men must be here by this time, or else had passed through; there might be all sorts of trouble in store for him here at Kearny.

Not from the sentries at the gates, at least. These paid little attention to anyone. A constant flood of people were moving in and out of the fort enclosure. The smithy here was busily at work, the traders were doing a heavy business, a few Indians were in sight. Morgan rode in, halted, looked around for Diane, and saw nothing of her in the crowd. He directed Concho toward the busy farriers around their forge; the clang of iron on anvil made him think wearily of Hadley and old days.

Then, as he dismounted, came the thing he had been dreading. He dropped to the ground and staggered, clutching at the saddle-blanket for support. For an instant his senses were swimming. Then his eyes cleared, he was aware of a man peering at him, a face dimly familiar. The man swung around with a shout.

"Hey, boys! Come on, come on! It's him!"

Tennessee face, Tennessee voice. Recognition wakened in him, and alarm. Half a dozen men came plunging at him, vociferous, surrounding him; the men from Tennessee were here. But not as enemies. To his utter amazement they were friends, and their friendliness surged at him like a wave.

CHAPTER X

REUNION

DAZED, bewildered, Morgan found himself greeted with wild delight. His hand was wrung, he was overwhelmed with loud and ardent recognition.

"We got your saddle safe, Wright!" cried one man.

"Pistols too," added another. "We been mighty put about, I can tell you! Yes, sir. Mighty down-hearted. I seen the gal come ridin' in and got the boys together."

"Hey, here she comes!" broke in another, and the group split. Morgan saw Diane coming and swallowed hard. It was incomprehensible. The Tennessee men doffed hats and awkwardly heaped her with apologies and contrite expressions.

"But I don't understand!" she exclaimed.

"Me neither," added Morgan, finding voice at last. "I thought you fellers were hell-bent to hang me!"

"Well, we was," said the Tennessee leader. "We cain't get out of it nohow, Wright. All we can do is say we're durned sorry. You see, we found out the truth quick enough. Them two rapscallions near got away with all our stock; did get off with some of it. We got most of the critters back. We met up with some wagons from St. Jo, later on, and they knew about Miss Mora . . . Well, it's all cleared away anyhow."

"Lucky you showed up," cried another. "We're powerful thankful, you bet! Pullin' out in the morning . . ."

That was all Morgan remembered. He gave way suddenly and completely, as weakness mastered him.

Morning came again; he lay in a bunk back of the trading store and wolfed the breakfast Diane brought. Griscom's agent, who had put them up, came and shook hands. Morgan was anxious to dress and get outside, but found there was no haste.

"Those Tennessee men were wonderful!" said Diane. "They pulled out at daybreak; but your outfit is here safely, they turned over the packs and mules, and they just couldn't do enough to make up for the trouble they caused us."

"What about Barnes and Walters?" asked Morgan.

She shook her head. "No telling."

The agent struck in. "I'll be sending a couple of Griscom wagons along to Laramie next week, if you folks want to go with 'em. You'll be sure of beds and grub and company."

"Thanks." Morgan smiled. "Next week, I'll be far on that road myself."

"Well, just ask for anything you want. Dan's note said you're one of his men, and I know Miss Mora, so the sky's the limit. See you later; got to keep busy."

The agent departed. Diane smiled at Morgan, but her eyes were grave.

"Don't rush; you mustn't. You can't stand it yet. Whether you want to or not, you've got to take it easy for another week or so and get back your strength."

"What I want right now is a razor," said Morgan. "Where's Concho?"

"Safe. He's been turned in with the cavalry horses."

"Well, I'm going to get up and about," he rejoined. "Meantime, keep your eyes open for a man called Tom Herrick of Sacramento. Maybe we can find out more about him." He told of the amazing offer to buy Concho. She nodded and went to the door.

"See you later. Get dressed and you can get everything you want in the store. More wagons came in late last night, a lot of them, replacing the companies that pulled out this morning."

She was gone. Morgan, dressing hurriedly, recollected the huge numbers of wagons he had seen on the previous afternoon. Now, feeling himself once more, repaired by the night's heavy slumber, he was impatient to see if he could learn anything of the Macoupin Company.

He passed on into the store, which was crowded with clamorous men newly arrived, and not a few women. His few necessities were charged to Griscom's account. Stuffing them into his pockets, he stepped outside for a breath of air before getting rid of his beard.

At once, he was fascinated; overnight, the whole face of things had changed. New companies were camped about the fort, new faces were on every side. He strolled out to the gates and saw clumps of wagons forming up and getting away, pressed by the eternal impatience to be off and on the road to gold that would not wait.

Suddenly Morgan stiffened; he flung back his shoulders and stepped forward, squarely in the way of a rider approaching the gates. He pulled down his hatbrim and centered the road, moccasined feet planted apart. The rider drew rein angrily.

"Git!" he barked. "Git out'n the way, will ye?"

"No," growled Morgan.

"Then, by heck . . . Holy cat!" yelped the rider, and scrambled down. "You, durn you! And dummed if I knowed you at all, with them whiskers! Shake, you lousy galoot!"

One-eye Potts, patch and all, hurling himself on Morgan in wild jubilation, holding him off to stare at him, pumping his hand, smiting him with joyous fist until Morgan drew away to protect his still tender back.

"The company's here!" cried Potts. "Your folks are here . . . Why, if ye ain't a man grown, 'stead of a gawky boy! Got a horse? Come on, let's go! Company's camped 'bout three mile upstream . . . Say, this is great! Your pappy sure will throw a fit to see you. Heard 'bout your doin's at Independence and didn't know whether to larrup you good or be proud of you. Where's the black horse?"

"Here," said Morgan, grinning widely. "Wait till I get shaved . . ."

Potts gripped his arm. "Listen! Don't do it. Hadn't ought to make your ma

wait, she's that wild for news of you. She's aimin' to come in later to ask. Then again, you'd best go like you are, general reasons."

"What?" demanded Morgan. Potts surveyed him with the one good eye, wrinkling up his seamed visage.

"Ain't right sure. You a man or a boy?"

After an instant, Morgan comprehended the shrewd import of the words. There was Diane, too; he was anxious to take her along to this reunion.

"I've got a friend with me, One-eye," he said. "We're going with the wagon as far as Laramie, anyhow. Hm! Maybe you're right about the shaving. I'll let it rest."

"Far's Laramie?" Potts scowled. "What's your notion?"

"I'm set to meet Dan Griscom there. I . . . Well, I'm one of his men now."

Potts stepped back a pace. Incredulity showed in his face.

"One o' Griscom's men? Who's been feedin' you pap? You know what you're sayin' or not? Don't go to makin' that brag around these parts, Morgan. Too many folks liable to know Dan Griscom. He ain't takin' on greenhorns. Who's your friend?"

Morgan grinned afresh. "A young lady. Miss Mora, Diane Mora."

"Mora?" One-eye blinked. "Jose Mora's gal, maybe?"

"You hit it. Know her?"

"Heard tell of her. Knowed Jose pretty well when I was teamin' for Griscom. Grand feller, too; part Injun, part greaser, part American. Where is he?. I aim to wet my whistle."

"Dead."

"Huh? What you tellin' me?"

"The truth. He was killed by bandits. His daughter's with me. Griscom meets us at Laramie, and takes me on to work for him there. Now come along and we'll find Diane and get Concho saddled. You can stay here; let her ride your horse, and we'll find the camp all right."

FOR the next twenty minutes they were busy, and One-eye Potts was reduced to a state of blank wonder. Diane was found, Concho was saddled; the two mounted and were off, leaving Potts to wave his hat after them and then go wet his whistle unhurried.

"You should have waited, Morgan!" exclaimed the breathless, excited girl. "I wanted to get some clothes instead of these doeskin . . ."

"You'll go as you are," broke in Morgan, laughing. "Clothes be hanged! You weren't wearing a calico dress when I met you. Say, this saddle feels good again! Riding's a lot easier with stirrups. Race you to that bunch of wagons ahead!"

He was exhilarated, filled with eagerness and new strength. They rode on and on past the groups of wagons, learned that the Macoupin Company was the next ahead, and passed two of the Illinois men going to the fort. These did not recognize Morgan at all and he rode on.

And there was the big red wagon, his mother and sister washing their hair beside it, his father coming up from the river with a pail of fresh water. Morgan drew rein with a sudden sense of shock, and stared at the burdened man. Why, this was not the Silas Wright he had known!

Gone was the old droop; shoulders squared, Wright looked the big, powerful man he actually was. The face was different, too; the harried, anxious expression was no more, the tired eyes had become strong and vigorous and purposeful. Looking up, Silas Wright nodded casually, gave the girl in her leather garments a curious glance, and went on. Morgan gave Diane a swift wink, and dismounted.

"Hurry up with that rinse water, Silas," he heard his mother exclaim. "I want to get dressed and go back to the fort. That no-account Potts is liable to forget all about asking after Morgan."

She bent over the small wooden tub, emptying out the soapy water. Betty, putting back the wet hair from her eyes, gave the approaching Morgan an indignant look.

"Well, what you want?" she demanded. "What you staring for? Ain't you ever seen a woman washing her hair before?"

"Nope. Never seen a woman need it

worse, either," replied Morgan, chuckling.

At sound of his voice, Mrs. Wright straightened up and turned swiftly. Her gaze widened on Morgan; a gasp escaped her . . . Then she had him in her arms, with one glad cry that spoke all her heart.

Silas Wright stared, uttered a wild shout of recognition, and rushing up to them thumped his son on the back in frantic delight. He smode hard, putting his strength into the blow—and his hand landed directly over the newly healed wound. One stab of blinding pain shot through Morgan, and he slumped to the ground.

There was utter consternation, broken by Diane's frantic scream, and she was among them all like a wildcat. Luckily, she regained her head after that first moment, and took charge with some composure. Her hasty explanations, the sight of the bared back, and Mrs. Wright comprehended; Betty was sent flying for a surgeon, who was among the Macoupin County Argonauts, and Morgan was lifted into the wagon.

He wakened there, later, to find Diane and his mother beside him. The wound was not reopened, all was well, the setback would be only temporary. An hour afterward, in fact, he was sitting out in the warm sunlight once more, the contrite Silas Wright attending him, and Diane gone to the fort in search of the store clothes she craved, with Betty and Mrs. Wright to keep her company.

Morgan made shift to get his face scraped clean once more, and talked with his father while he did so. He was conscious of queer things between them, a new and different status; the older man was aware of it also.

"You're not the same, son."

"Nor you."

Silas Wright nodded. "I reckon. The son I knew has gone; you've come back a new man. I'm no hand to mince words, son. You've got your own row to hoe, and it's a big world. You've lit out on your own, and from what Miss Mora tells us, you're equipped to make good. Now, do we pull together, or do we pull separate?"

Morgan studied the older man for a long moment. A big world; that held the deeper meaning of it all. The world behind him, the world of Hadley and the mills and the grubbing things he knew, was fading out completely. The world ahead was growing upon him; the world of Dan Griscom, of far camps under lonely skies, of self-dependence and everything done with his own two hands.

"It's like you," he said slowly, "to look things in the face and not to shirk an understanding. I admire you an awful lot; I hope I'll turn out to be as fine a man as you are. If I have any sayso, we'll pull together."

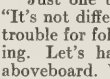
"Shake on it, son." Silas held out his hand, and they exchanged a hearty grin of mutual comprehension. "Still and all, you ain't denying that you've got your own future?"

Morgan smiled, and wiped his face clean of soap.

"I'm denying nothing. I've got things to do, yes. A man to meet at Laramie—Dan Griscom. You've heard Potts speak of him, I think."

"Often." Silas Wright pondered, his brows downdrawn. Morgan, watching him, felt a chill sensation; that face, those eyes . . . The truth broke upon him suddenly and took his breath.

"Just one thing," went on the other. "It's not different viewpoints that make trouble for folks, it's lack of understanding. Let's have everything clean and aboveboard. What's in your mind about this young woman?"



MORGAN, still struggling to realize the fact that had just come to him, with difficulty forced himself to swing back to this question.

"If she'll have me, I want to marry her," he said abruptly. "We'll talk about that at Laramie, maybe. Until then, she goes on with us. She can have my place in the wagon. I'll sleep on the ground; I've got used to that."

"So've I," said Silas Wright, and smiled suddenly. "All right, son, it's a go. If she measures up, we'll tell by the time we reach Laramie. Hold on, now! You're not asking my opinion of her, I know; I don't know her well enough to give one, either. And it don't signify.

It's you'd be marrying her, not me. So let's keep on pulling together."

"That's fine!" exclaimed Morgan. "But there's something else. I've got to tell you now, while we're alone, so the others won't hear. Back home, Potts told me that your brother Abner wasn't really dead at all but had—well, gone to the bad, sort of."

His father's smile vanished. "I've been afeared of that," he said gravely. "Abner had no notion to work; he'd lie when the truth would ha' served him better. Still and all, he had his good points. He set store by his folks, too."

"He's here now . . ."

Silas Wright listened gloomily, while Morgan excitedly poured out the thing that had leaped through his mind. The same look, eyes, features . . . Tom Herrick of Sacramento! He knew now why the man had wakened familiar echoes in him; why, upon learning his identity, Herrick had so hastily turned away and departed. And Silas Wright, hearing all this, nodded dark assent.

"Most likely you're right," he said. "Well, he knows we're here; if he wants to look us up, he will. If not, that's his affair. A thousand dollars for a horse! Sounds crazy enough to be Abner, for sure. When he set his heart on a thing, he got it by hook or by crook. Nobody ever allowed he was shiftless or a weakling. He had too much strength for his own good, that's all. We'll see about that California farm, when we get there."

The three women came back, later, escorted by One-eye Potts, who was mellow and loquacious and full of high spirits. Diane brought news, too. Herrick, who was passably well known in trading circles, did quite a livestock business to the westward. He had been seen riding away this same morning, Laramie bound, with one of the first wagon trains to get off.

"So there goes your thousand dollars, and temptation," she concluded gaily. Morgan exchanged a glance with his father, and the subject of Herrick was not mentioned again.

Nor was the subject of Diane so much as brought up. Mrs. Wright announced that Diane was accompanying them to Laramie, and the discussion was ended before it began. Parcels of dress-goods were exhibited, a fairly recent copy of Godey's Lady's Book with patterns had been obtained, and by the time the wagon reached Laramie, the dresses would be made. Diane was no longer worried about her doe-skin costume, it appeared.

"You're a wonder!" said Morgan quietly, alone for a space with his mother. "I was scared of you and father . . . Well, you know."

"Yes, I know," she responded, and patted his hand. "To be honest about it, we were a mite scared of you, too. No more. You and your father seem to have hit it off. And I like your Diane; unless I'm much mistaken, she's all right."

"Thanks," said Morgan simply.

Talking would never end, it seemed; all the incidents since the separation in St. Louis had to be covered, Diane had her own story to tell, One-eye was full of information about the trail ahead; and they were getting off in the morning. The Macoupin Company's wagons were in good shape to keep going. The four Illinois men from Independence came over in the evening for a delighted reunion with Morgan, and when they left Potts seized the occasion for a private word.

"I done you wrong this morning, back at the fort," he observed. "I don't savvy it all yet, but you got powerful strong medicine, like I always said. Lemme see that there medicine you got from Diane, will you?"

Morgan displayed the tiny beaded bag, and Potts licked his lips covetously.

"Yep. Sure is Cap Gregg's medicine; I've seen it many a time. If he'd been wearing it when he set out from Frisco with the Trinidad Company, he'd never have gone under, I can tell you! Him and Colonel Waugh was great friends, back in '46; I was with 'em both at Independence. Well, times sure has changed! Gregg's dead, and I'm headin' back to California, like a fool."

Morgan regarded him curiously.

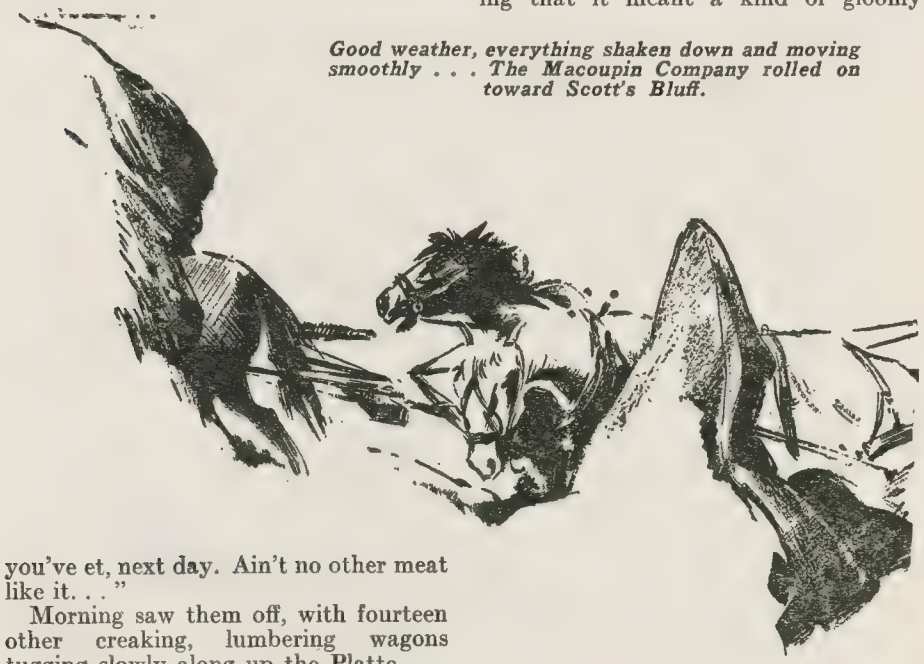
"What's your goal, One-eye? What d'you want to do when you get there?"

"Danged if I know," was the morose reply.

"You might pause and look around at Laramie, then. Dan Griscom could may-

be find use for you," and, for the first time, he hinted at Griscom's purpose after reaching Laramie. One-eye whistled softly and rolled his one good orb.

"Holy cats! Keep your trap shut about this to anyone else. We'll see what turns up at Laramie, then. And I got a hint from one o' them Injuns at the fort, about buffler. Soon's you're able to ride, you and me will take a pasear off'n the road, and we'll get us some of the eatin'est meat you ever seen! Yes, sir. You can set down and eat ten, fifteen pound buffler steaks, and never know



Good weather, everything shaken down and moving smoothly . . . The Macoupin Company rolled on toward Scott's Bluff.

you've et, next day. Ain't no other meat like it. . . "

Morning saw them off, with fourteen other creaking, lumbering wagons tugging slowly along up the Platte . . . slowly, yet able here to cover twenty-five to thirty miles a day. The Argonauts were getting into their stride.

CHAPTER XI

RIFLE LAW

MORGAN rode in the wagon-bed of mornings, mounted Concho and ambled beside in the warm afternoons, took his turn with the night-guards over the animals, and with each day knew strength and vigor more surely returning to him.

Good weather, everything shaken down and moving smoothly, mileage put behind. . . The Macoupin Company trooped along in the greatest of exultation. Difficulties seemed conquered, the western prospect held no further terrors. The dark warnings of One-eye Potts that all the difficulties thus far were the merest child's play to what lay ahead, made no impression whatever. One of the company who had classical learning dubbed him a Cassandra, and the name was flung at him on all occasions in gleeful good humor. Discovering that it meant a kind of gloomy prophet, One-eye resented it rather violently. There was a truer meaning, however. His auguries of evil, like those of Cassandra, were simply not believed.

Yet, in these first days of the three-hundred-odd mile stretch to Laramie, there were omens in plenty other than the voice of Potts. Not in the way of physical difficulties; the South Fork crossing, a mile wide and a foot deep, gave no trouble, and being in the vanguard of the rush, grass was plentiful for all.

The country was changing, however; as they trudged on up along the river, high bluffs and stunted cedar came into view. The air was changing; it became thin and clear. Men, too, were changing. At the South Fork crossing a company from ahead had halted and drawn out to one side, in a furious wrangle of dispute little short of pitched battle; looking back, Morgan could see the wagons forming into two companies. And, more ominous sight, carrion birds were circling a man's body, somewhat off the road; upon riding over to the spot, the corpse was seen to be riddled with bullets and bearing a scrawled sign: *Executed for Good Reason.* No reason stated; this was still more sinister. Passions ran high in this country of rifle-law.

Then, amid lulled security, trouble struck hard. A sudden gusty breath out of nowhere, a swift howling storm breaking in the night, the animals all scattered in terror, Concho alone remaining; fortunately he had been tethered by the wagon.

This meant turning out and hunting the stock by the light of lightning flashes, and on into all next morning. The driving rain continued. Horses, mules, oxen stampeded from a hundred outfits had taken to the back trail and were strewn out for miles. Night came before they were found and separated, before the rain ended. The wagon-trains, naturally, had camped close to the water, and, when next daylight brought the move onward, had to pull through muddy quagmires before they could reach higher ground.

Up and down the river bottoms it was a wild and frantic battle. To move a single wagon, teams must be doubled and trebled; added to this, the river was suddenly up with the rain, and the Macoupin Company was in acute peril of being flooded out. A wagon that broke down was a wagon lost; and less fortunate companies sustained dire losses.

Here was work for all hands, sick or well, women driving the teams, men working knee-deep in mud, always struggling forward. Morgan was able to do his share, and they drew out of it at last, like a bad dream lost in sunlight, and well lost.

Now came glorious country, glorious days, all setbacks forgotten, arid stretches of sand and naked rock bluffs, valleys green with pitch pine and cedar, stupendous formations such as Courthouse Rock and Chimney Rock, the wagons rolling on to Scott's Bluff and the settlement that had arisen around the old trading post there.

Each day brought new encounters. Pony or express riders on the dash, Mormon wagons rattling emptily eastward; wagons turning back, smitten by sickness or death or dissension; wagons broken down and abandoned, the stock lost. Worse, piles of household goods or even supplies were to be seen where loads had been desperately lightened; some had been destroyed in wanton fury, some remained for the taking. There was none to take, for by this time all had learned the disastrous folly of overloading.

The Macoupin Company swung ahead without dissension or further accident, thanks largely to the sound advice of Potts; his counsel was gladly taken, if his prophecies were not. From One-eye, Morgan had held nothing back, and the day they got into Scott's Bluff, he and Potts rode ahead to select a camping site. They picked a spot by the ice-cold spring among the bluffs, the river being here at some distance, and then turned into the trading post.

The trader, a squawman with Indian family, nodded to Morgan's description of Herrick.

"Dunno his name," he rejoined, "but I know the feller by sight. Seen him afore now. Come westbound four days back, pushin' his wagons hard, too."

"Wagons?" queried Potts, surprised.

"Yep. Them wagons they call Dearborn carriages; two of 'em, with spry horses and six men from Peoria. A real elegant outfit, and they had money, too. None of your swap, but honest cash paid down. Feller I talked with, named Barnes, allowed the party aimed to buy 'em land in Californy."

Barnes! Morgan, for the moment, was thunderstruck; but the descriptions left no doubt that Frank Barnes and Herrick were now in company, and also in charge of the fast-steppers from Peoria, as the trader termed the outfit.

Outside, the two mounted and rode away, and One-eye Potts drew rein.

"Well, I had a sneakin' suspicion all along," he announced grimly. "I reckon ye got to face the facts now, partner."

"No, no!" exclaimed Morgan, utterly dismayed. "You can't mean that, One-eye . . . Why, he's my uncle!"

"That don't signify. Him and Barnes are in cahoots—why? Not by no sort of accident, you can bet! I told you he got run out'n Californy; that was last year, afore I left there. Now he's took the name of Herrick, sure."

"But he can't be one of that Nighthawk gang!"

"Knowin' him, it ain't likely," One-eye said significantly. "He ain't one of 'em; he's the boss. The chief. Him and Barnes are guidin' this passel o' fools from Peoria. They got money. They're travelin' fast. Once beyond Laramie, they won't be heard of no more. Well, it ain't the first time nor the last . . . "

"Look here!" broke in Morgan. "I can ride on to Laramie. Maybe Griscom's there. If we can't do anything else, we can warn those Peoria men!"

Potts shook his head.

"Save your wind. They got four days' start from here, travelin' fast. Less'n seventy miles to Laramie from here; they're already to the fort and gone."

True enough. One-eye went on, sagely.

"Six of 'em. . . Ain't likely they'll be murdered, unless Herrick has his hull gang waiting. Chances are they'll just be set afoot and robbed somewheres. Let it be."

Morgan assented, gloomily. He could not deny the implications of what they had just now learned. Herrick was assuredly no underling; yet it was staggering to conceive him as the leader of this criminal band. His association with Barnes was enough to point the way to the truth. Not enough to prove anything, however, and on this reflection the

troubled Morgan resolved to let the future solve its own problems. Herrick was gone, and despite Griscom's plans might well be gone forever.

Scott's Bluff, that rugged mass of rock rising out of the plains, fell behind. They were on the last stretch to Laramie, now . . . Laramie, which would mark a third of the way to the California mines. The prairie was gone, ahead lay uplands mounting to the Divide in folded masses of grandeur.

IN these days Morgan, like the country itself, had changed; rather, he felt the completion of change. He was hardened, brought to a truer realization of the things around. He made no mention to Diane of their compact, or of the future, and indeed there was little chance for any private discussion, and little time. Each day, the hours were full, and even the promised hunt for buffalo had to be postponed. Here was a job to be done; if Laramie were to mark its immediate end, there was no time to think of other things.

He was seeing Diane in a new light, too. The company contained other women, but she was the life of them all, helping here, advising there. The evening after they left Scott's Bluff, he was helping his father unhitch, when Silas Wright paused with a level question.

"How do things stand in your mind about her?" said he, nodding toward the figure of Diane, who was making a fire of buffalo chips. "Changed any?"

"Yes and no," replied Morgan. "Not so much changed, I guess, as steadied. Settled down. More sure of myself, if you know what I mean."

His father nodded. "You ain't the only one. The doc and his friends, in that green-striped wagon yonder. . . They're all set on her like moonsick calves. Don't blame them a mite. Nor you. She's as fine a young woman as I ever laid eyes on."

Morgan laughed in relief. "Thanks. I guess we'll pull together—all of us! And I'm not worried about the doctor or anyone else. Diane and I will settle things, one way or another, at Laramie."

He was quite content to let things drift until then. If attentions were paid Diane on all sides, he could not help it. Unworried? That was a lie. He longed with all his heart to be alone on the wide horizon with her, but this could not be. Evening brought no privacy, for nightly the whole company had a get-together within the circling wagons, when everyone chipped in with song and story. Laramie promised to change everything; but, as Laramie loomed nearer, the promise faded under the light of harsh reality.

Whether he would be with the wagons after Laramie, was a question. Nothing could be settled until meeting with Griscom or hearing from him. And he could realize that if he did team up with Dan Griscom, Diane must go on with the wagon—if she were still of that mind.

His own uncertainty was echoed by the whole company. Now they, too, began to realize hard facts, proving that the dire predictions of One-eye Potts were not fictional. Here they began to meet the frightful backwash of lost hopes. In the van of the rush though they were, a stream of despondent, broken Argonauts was flooding back.

Horses had given out, in many cases; oxen were slower but surer. Ahead was frightful country where the trail crossed the Black Hills—country where the wagons had to be locked together on the grades, and where the next leg of the journey, nearly three hundred miles to the South Pass, was one continual agonizing effort.

"Ain't the Black Hills, rightly, but folks call 'em that," said Potts. "The Sioux call 'em the Wind River Mountains. The Black Hills lay further east and north. Not that it matters a particle. Half of them emigrant maps everybody's got are wrong anyhow."

An unjust charge; the maps with which every wagon had provided itself before the start, were on the whole up to date and accurate, though One-eye Potts despised them.

Not that maps could help the helpless; there was another side to the story, as Morgan found when the Macoupin Company laid over for a day to make repairs. Other companies had halted for

like reasons; a great meadow beside the Platte was white with wagon-tops. It was an enormous momentary town, hundreds of wagons lying there. Loads had to be shifted and made secure, wagons re-arranged, and above all, repairs made to the wagons, or beasts cared for.

Portable anvils were ringing, horses and mules were re-shod, metal-work patched up. In this assemblage were men of all trades and professions, and co-operative effort was made to aid all who needed it. Carpenters moved about from group to group, doctors were kept busy dispensing medicine or advice, huge washings were accomplished at the river-bank, animals were treated by men who knew their business. Graves were dug, bodies laid away within them with due ceremony.

It was all a picture of hustle and activity, of willing hands making light work, of kindly spirit and good-neighbor energy. Wagon-wheels were taken off by brisk men who went from one company to another, greasing and working, making all fit and trim. When toward next sun-up the Macoupin Company pulled out again, the whole enormous array was in motion, the various groups breaking up and moving off, and the meadow was green again.

The last night out, they camped twenty miles from Laramie, figuring to rest up a day at the fort. Supper over, not without many mysterious allusions from Mrs. Wright and Betty, the three women vanished into the wagon, leaving Morgan and his father and Potts, who usually stuck close to their wagon, to clean up.

"What are they up to?" demanded Morgan.

His father laughed. "Vanity, I reckon. Soon's we can get into the wagon, get a fresh candle for that lantern, will you? We'll have to buy some candles at Laramie."

"You won't buy nothin' there," declared Potts with gloomy satisfaction. "Long as the American Fur Company had the fort, you could do all kinds o' trading. That quit when the sojers took it over. No traders here; too hard to get goods."

LARAMIE PEAK vanished in the deepening sky, the stars glittered, and the Illinois man who was the proud owner of a bugle blew the usual assembly call. As Morgan held the candle-lantern for them, three strangers emerged from the wagon—trail garments gone, gingham and calico dresses fluttering in the night wind, hair arranged beneath unwonted hats.

"Why, Betty, you're clear grown, with your hair done up!" exclaimed Morgan. "And you, Diane—"

He broke off, wordless. She smiled, lifted her arms, swung about to show her dress; it was the first time he had seen her except in the doe-skin garb. Now, beneath a hat borrowed from Betty, she was a stranger indeed. Morgan stared hard, remained speechless.

"What's the matter with you?" broke out his mother. "I declare! You act like Diane was something out of Barnum's museum!"

"No, no, it's not that," exclaimed Morgan awkwardly. "I . . . Well, I always thought she was grand looking, but I didn't realize she was so downright beautiful!"

"Thank you, sir!" Diane curtsied, laughing. "Will you permit me to take your arm to the assembly? Of course, if you don't like the new dress I sewed all myself . . . "

"Oh, I expect I'll get used to it; sort of surprised me. Soon's I get a new candle in the lantern, we'll go."

Voices rose in vociferous excitement upon the firelight, for every woman in the company had prettied up tonight, in preparation for Laramie. Amid gales of laughter the singing and banjo-playing began. It was broken in upon by one of the three night-guards who were on watch with the animals. He came into the circle of light, two shadowy horsemen remaining behind him.

"Two fellers out here," he said. "One of 'em's been sick and I ain't fetching 'em in; might be the cholera or somethin' catching. They want to get on to Laramie and the sick man he's mighty poorly and ain't et all day, and could somebody favor him with a bite, no matter what?"

A dozen voices pealed assent, and Morgan sprang up.

"You bet! I'll take 'em some cornpone and coffee; got it all set by to clean up later. Tell 'em to stay put."

"I'll lend a hand," volunteered Potts. When they were out of the circle, he grunted, "Sounds mighty curious. Two fellers riding, no food, and sick! Ain't no Argonauts, that's certain, if they're riding."

In the starlight, they took out the food and coffee to the figures sitting their horses beyond the wagon circle. At One-eye's hearty invitation to alight and eat, one of the two men dissented.

"Mighty good of you folks, but we aim to keep a-going. My partner won't make it if'n he don't stick. Got him tied in the saddle now. Nothin' to be scared of; he just took down with fever in the river bottoms. Here y'are, Buck! Swig this coffee and you'll be prime."

Buck! Morgan approached the sick man, who straightened up in the saddle, took the mug of coffee, and greedily gulped at it. He was bearded, indistinct, but Morgan knew him none the less.

"Gosh, that's good!" he said, reaching down the mug. Then his voice failed, as Morgan shoved his hat back to show his face.

"Buck Walters, huh? Watch your step, One-eye! We got two Nighthawks here . . . "

"And I got one of your pistols here," said Potts grimly. "Set steady, gents!"

The two riders sat motionless. Walters let out a startled yip of terror.

"Go slow! Don't go to shootin', now! We ain't no Nighthawks, Wright—no matter what we was, we ain't now. I'm terrible sick."

"Better call out the company," said Potts, "and string the both of 'em up, or tie 'em and take 'em into the fort. So this is 'Rapaho Smith's partner, is it?"

"This other feller ain't no Nighthawk," responded Walters earnestly. "He's been good to me. We're just traveling together."

"You lie," cut in Morgan. "You're going on to meet Herrick. Yes, I know him!"

Walters slumped again in the saddle. "Well, it ain't no crime to be aiming to meet him, is it?" he whined hopelessly. "Wright, I'm terrible sick. You hadn't ought to hold things ag'in me."

"Very well," said Morgan with swift decision. "Here's some more coffee. Swallow it, take this cornbread, and get on your way. When you meet Herrick, tell him that I know who he is, and I also know his position with the Nighthawks; and he'd better travel far and fast. And if we find you in Laramie when we get there tomorrow, I'll tell everybody who you are. Get out!"

The two riders lessened upon the starlight. Potts grumbled.

"Now you've done something, good or bad, I dunno."

"I do," said Morgan. "No doubt now about who and what Tom Herrick of Sacramento is! And he'll know that I know. As for this poor devil, I don't want his blood on my hands. Arapaho Smith paid in full for murdering Diane's father, and the quicker we get shut of that whole gang, the better."

One-eye Potts grunted.

"Dang it! I s'pose you're right. Anyhow, you've sure growed up! I despise a man that's wishy-washy. Don't matter if a thing's good or bad, so long as a feller does it. I reckon Dan Griscom seen you was that kind of a man."

Morgan laughed, and led the way back to the assembly. He had obeyed the dictates of impulse and conscience. He had washed his hands of the past, closing accounts with the Nighthawks in a decent manner, making amends for the killings which still worried him at times. Now he had sent Tom Herrick a warning to clear out, and whether Griscom liked it or not, it was for the best; he had done what he must, even if it ended his dealing with Dan Griscom.

Destiny, however, is not so easily satisfied.

CHAPTER XII

GRISCOM PAYS A DEBT

IT WAS late afternoon when the Macoupin Company tugged its way across the shallow ford of the Laramie Fork and came rolling down upon the

fort, which was still a mile and a half in the distance.

An imposing place, this, an amazing place to find upon the borders of the wilderness! The high, massive walls were built of adobe, with corner bastions, and adjoining was a huge corral. Whitewashed, gleaming, boasting a couple of small brass cannon, it was impregnable to savage arms, a secure fortalice against the powerful Sioux tribes to the north and the Cheyennes and other plains marauders.

Outside the fort and along the creek the ground was white with wagons, and a number of Indian lodges stood separately clumped. Morgan and Potts rode in well ahead of the company, One-eye to pick a camp site, and Morgan upon his own occasions.

Leaving Potts, Morgan headed for the gates of the fort, uneasily conscious that his entire future might hinge upon what transpired here. Despite himself and his first reactions, he had come to count more and more heavily upon Dan Griscom and the trading business. Here in the western regions it was vastly different from the life of a shopkeeper in the east; it held a tincture of action, of adventure, which drew and drew at his imagination far beyond the first dream of a farm in golden California. Also, and equally important, the personality of Dan Griscom tugged with compelling force.

He dismounted at the gates and led Concho into the huge enclosure, which was teeming with people and animals. In one corner a forge was belching sparks and clangor; everywhere soldiers and emigrants were mingled, tongues clamorous with all the varied recollections of home.

Morgan glanced about, uncertain where to ask news of Griscom. He saw several bearded men who by their moccasins and general attire might be traders or scouts. He was aware of no little admiration created by Concho. Then, as he hesitated, three men came pushing through the throngs, making for him. Leading the other two was a forceful, heavy-set man with matted beard and determined air, who bawled a peremptory word.

"Here, mister! That horse you're leading belongs to me."

Morgan halted and faced the man, a startled jab piercing deeply into him.

"You talking to me?" he rejoined. "My name's Wright."

"Mine's Job Francis, since we're bein' polite," came the reply, with a sneer. Hostility was in the air. People began to gather quickly. Francis turned to those around. "Folks, this horse was stole from me back in Independence. Don't take my sayso for it. Some of you gents look him over. You'll find a shi off-ear and the brand of an open hand on his near flank. Take off the saddle and you'll find the same mark, cut with a knife, underneath the right side."

Morgan felt the jab turn into a cold chill. He had more than once wondered where Hackensack could have procured so fine an animal, not to mention the splendid outfit.

"No need of taking off the saddle," he said. "It does have such a mark. And the horse is also marked as you say. I suppose you know the animal's name?"

"Certain," declared Francis. "His name's Concho. And furthermore, he knows it. See?"

Concho, indeed, flicked his ears forward at sound of his name. Morgan, overcome by sudden desperate dismay, gave no sign of it.

"Suppose you call him," he said, and dropped the bridle reins. "If you were ever his master, he ought to know you. Go ahead, try it out. He has plenty of brains."

"Think you're smart, huh?" snapped Francis. "Not much. These two gents," and he indicated his two companions, "know me and know the horse."

The pair, rough fellows of the same stripe as Francis, assented emphatically and loudly, going into detail as to where and when the horse had been stolen, taking their time about it and making their affirmation impressive.

"Horse thief!" The word arose and was passed around more loudly. The crowd was now thickly gathered on all sides. Soldiers were shoving through; an officer stood looking on and listening. Morgan was increasingly aware of hostility flaring up on all sides, for horse

thieves were a common enemy of all emigrants.

Outwardly, he remained cool and unperturbed; inwardly he was in frantic tumult. He saw no kindly face around, there was no chance of evasion or escape even had he fancied such a course. That Concho had been stolen from Francis, he did not believe; the man and the horse did not match at all. Yet he could put up no objection, he had no defense, unless he were to launch into the long-winded story of Hackensack.

"Where did you get the horse?" he asked Francis quietly.

"St. Louis."

"You have a bill of sale, then."

Francis became passionate. "I don't need one. I've identified him. He's known to be my property. If'n you're so brash about a bill of sale, let's see your'n."

"That's right!" A dozen eager tongues set up clamorous assent. "Let's see your own bill of sale, mister!"

"Mebbe he's Wright, but more like he's wrong!" yapped a jokester. No smiles made answer; the faces around were hard, intent, menacing. The officer turned, talking low-voiced with someone; then the man speaking with him pushed past and sauntered out into the clear space.

He was Dan Griscom.

One pent-up breath escaped Morgan; but he stood motionless, staring. Griscom quite ignored him, and addressed Francis pleasantly.

"So the horse was stolen from you back in Independence, eh?"

"Sure was." Francis eyed him. "Who are you? What's it to you?"

"Plenty. My name's Griscom, Dan Griscom. I happen to be well known here."

Morgan was aware that the officer was giving orders, that soldiers were forming up around the group, that the gathered Argonauts were being pushed back. The name of Dan Griscom was repeated; the trader was obviously a person of note here.

"Tell me, Wright," and Griscom turned suddenly to Morgan, "whether Concho wears the same shoes he had when you got him?"

"Why, yes!" replied Morgan, puzzled.

"Good." Griscom swung around to Francis again. "If the horse belongs to you, then you know how the shoes are marked."

Francis was taken aback. He scowled, hesitated, cocked an eye around at the crowd.

"No, you're not slipping away," went on Griscom. "You and the two liars with you are staying right here; these soldiers will see to that. How are the shoes marked?"

"They ain't marked at all!" blustered Francis furiously. "Horseshoes are all alike. They ain't marked."

"Oh, indeed?" drawled Griscom. "But these are marked. How do I know? Because I had them put on the horse. Because the brand on his near flank is my own brand, and the shoes are also marked with the open hand. Because the horse never belonged to you at all. Because I have a bill of sale for him myself from a dealer at Independence. I also have a bill of sale for the saddle from the dealer who made it for me at Santa Fe. And lastly, because I lent Concho to Wright, who happens to be one of my own men and my friend. Looks like you're caught with your pants down, Mr. Francis. Thought you'd brand Wright as a horse thief and walk off with the horse yourself, eh? How come you knew so much about this horse, anyway?"

Morgan stood speechless. The truth flashed across his mind; Hackensack must have stolen Concho from Griscom —and out there in the Indian camp, Griscom had not so much as mentioned it!

A SUDDEN wild whoop burst up from the crowd around. Francis and his two companions were now the ones who had no evasion, no escape. The soldiers closed around them, but the crowd was in ugly temper. One man let up a wild yell.

"Who'll donate a feather bed, folks? Tar and feather the durned skunks!"

Wild applause burst forth; now the officer took charge, gained comparative silence, and more soldiers came pushing

through to reinforce his men. He turned to Morgan, just as a man who had examined one of Concho's shoes straightened up with a shout of confirmation that Griscom had spoken truth.

"You, Wright! Want to make charges against these three scoundrels?"

Morgan eyed the three. He stepped up to them and spoke to Francis, quietly.

"Come clean, and you'll go free. Did Herrick put you up to this?"

The man blinked at him amazedly, then found voice.

"No. Ain't seen him. Buck Walters told me about the horse, durn you!"

Walters! Morgan caught his breath.

"Is he here?"

"No," said Francis sullenly. "He come through early this morning and went on."

With a nod, Morgan turned, met the coolly inquiring eyes of Griscom, then nodded to the officer.

"Thanks. I ain't aiming to make charges; if I meet this polecat again, I'll handle him myself. Far's I'm concerned, let him go, if that suits Griscom."

"Suits me," Griscom said laconically.

"But," added Morgan, sweeping a look at the bearded faces around, "you folks might's well know, if you ever meet these three galoots again, they ain't to be trusted! If they don't belong to the Nighthawk gang, then I'm a liar. But I can't prove it."

The officer beckoned a sergeant.

"March 'em out clear of the wagons and turn 'em loose. If they have horses, let them take them and go. And you men!" He lifted his voice at the crowd around. "There'll be no feathering or lynch law here. See to it."

Morgan was mobbed by cheering, applauding men, as friendly now as they had been hostile a few moments before. Dan Griscom extricated him, got him to the barracks, and led him to a cell-like room. When the door closed, Morgan sank down on the cot and stared.

"You showed up like a miracle!"

The trader chuckled. "Just got in a couple hours ago myself."

"Then Concho belongs to you!" Morgan exclaimed, in sudden recollection.

"Yes. I left him in Independence and went to St. Louis by steamboat. When I came back, he had been stolen and was gone."

"Then Barnes or some other Nighthawk stole him, and Hackensack took him over! But they all knew him for Hackensack's horse, all of them! How did that happen?"

"I can tell you that," said Griscom, stuffing a pipe. "I've learned that these Nighthawks had a rendezvous near St. Jo. The horse was stolen a day or two after I left him in Independence. I was three weeks in St. Louis. During that time, Hackensack and the others had him in possession."

"But Hack was in St. Louis! He came up on the boat with you."

"He went to St. Louis on one boat, came back on the next," Griscom grunted. "If I'd suspected the truth about him, I'd never have been in a card game with the rat! Well, that clears away everything, eh?"

"I guess it does. And Concho goes slap back to you this minute!"

"Not much. He's yours. I saw what you thought of him, in the Indian camp; that's why I kept quiet then. He's yours, Wright, and the saddle. I've got another horse and outfit that suits me. I owe you a debt, remember, for saving those mules and packs, not to mention Diane. Call the account even. Where is she, by the way?"

"With my folks. With the wagons." Morgan stared up, dazedly. "Griscom, do you really mean it? Why, it can't—"

It could; Dan Griscom affirmed the fact with emphasis, and then dismissed the whole thing as a closed subject.

"We're friends; now let's get to business," he said briskly. "I want to have a talk with you and with Diane Mora tonight. I'll look up your wagon after supper."

"All right." Morgan straightened up. "But wait, Griscom! There's a lot you don't know."

"I guessed as much," the other said dryly, "when I heard what you said to that skunk Francis. Tom Herrick of Sacramento passed through here several days ago, I hear."

"Then you know him?"

"No. Know of him, though."

"Well, here's everything; maybe you'll say I did wrong . . . "

Griscom said nothing at all. He listened to all Morgan had to tell, finished his pipe, knocked it out, stood in frowning silence. Now, as ever, he wore an air of gathered strength, as though ready at each instant for some emergency.

"What about it?" demanded Morgan. "You won't like it, maybe, that I warned him."

"I'd ha' thought less of you if you hadn't," Griscom replied. "Most natural thing in the world. Your uncle, eh? Hm! It all fits together . . . These three rascals coming west to join him, Walters and another man, Herrick and Barnes. . . That's seven. Likely he has another few here and there. Quite a gang. You did right to let Walters go, last night; taught you a lesson. Show a wolf any pity and sure as hell he'll rip you up."

"You agreed to let Francis and the other two loose, just now."

The hard, incisive features split in a wide, mirthless grin that showed white teeth.

"Sure. Juan Vaca's a prime trailer; he'll track 'em to headquarters, wherever they go. And he's got Bigfoot Joe with him. Joe's a Delaware trapper and scout, who met me here."

Morgan whistled softly. "You didn't lose any time arranging it!"

"Man who loses time, loses more," said Griscom. "I like your way; we'll get on. You do things and damn the consequences! That's the surest sign of strong medicine in a man, Wright. I wish to thunder I had another good man or two."

Morgan recollected. "What about One-eye Potts? He used to work for you."

"Eh? One-eye?" Griscom's brows went up. "Sure! I saw him on the boat coming up from St. Louis. Where is he?"

"With our outfit. He hired out to the company for guide and hunter. He'd like nothing better than to join you." Morgan checked himself, with troubled air. "I guess the company is going to need him, though. They say the road from here to the South Pass is pretty bad, and he's been a lot of help."

"You'll find fifty wagons broke down or abandoned in the next fifty miles," Griscom assented. "All right, One-eye is the very man for me. Tell him he's working for me. Tell your company that I've got two wagons here I'm sending to Hangtown; they can join your outfit. The teamsters are good men, able men, who know the whole road, and will serve the company better than Potts, if the company will take 'em in."

"It's a go." Morgan rose, finding that darkness was growing on the room.

"And I'll be over in a couple hours. Want to talk with you and Diane alone. You look fit to eat dog! That's good."

In the level rays of sunset, Morgan mounted and rode out of the fort.

(To be concluded)

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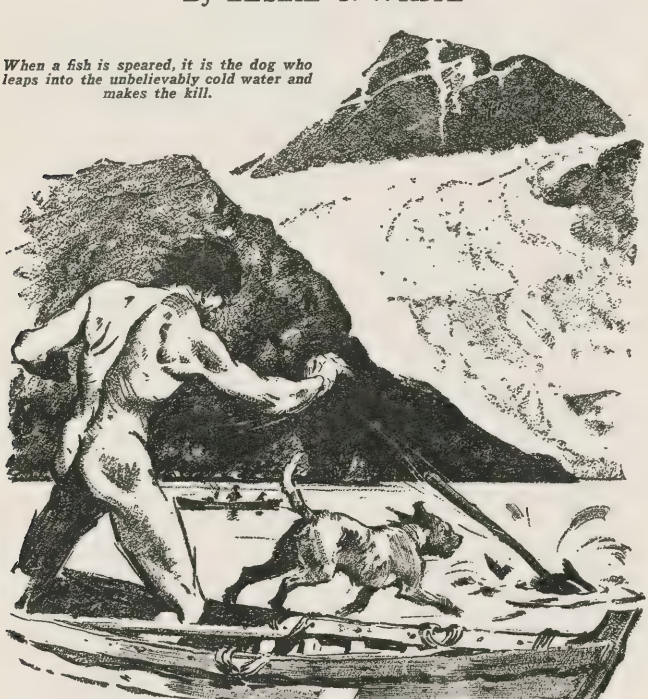
THE NINETY AND NINE

By LESLIE T. WHITE

When a fish is speared, it is the dog who leaps into the unbelievably cold water and makes the kill.



IT IS still possible—or was a few months ago—to embark on a modern, Diesel-powered cargo vessel and, after not many weeks of travel, visit the few remaining survivors of the stone-age peoples. But you will have to hurry. There are less than a hundred of them left and they are fast passing into oblivion.

They live in the wildest reaches of the Patagonian Archipelago; naked, or al-

A FACT STORY

most so, despite the fact that their home is within the fringe of the sub-antarctic. In a mostly unexplored locale of indescribable grandeur, in the most inhospitable climate the world can offer, they now share, as they have through the long centuries since the post-glacial age, their wilderness with the albatross and the penguin, the white whale and the steamer-duck. Once they had cousins living on nearby shores; the giant *Patagones* of the hill country, and the *Onas* and the *Haush* and the *Yahgans* on gale-swept Tierra del Fuego, but the vanguard of civilization—the explorers, the missionaries and the sealers—obliterated them. Only because their wilderness home has no commercial value, because this inaccessible, storm-racked, man-killing region is singularly unattractive to exploiters, a few Alacalufs survive.

TO AVOID the mountainous seas of the Roaring Forties which guard the Pacific entrance to the Straits of Magellan at the Evanjelistas; or the long, punishing trek around Cape Horn, which would add an extra four hundred miles to the passage, our little freighter—it was her final scheduled run—had nosed into the treacherous, twisting narrows of the Patagonian Archipelago.

The Patagonian Channel starts in the *Golfo de Peñas*, on the southwest coast of Chile, at about 47 south latitude, and for some three hundred odd miles squirms through a labyrinth of largely unexplored islands and mountain gorges, until it eventually runs into the comparative comfort of the Straits of Magellan. There are only four pilots in the world licensed to guide ships through this region, but with one of them at the wheel, and a little luck, it is the lesser of the three evils.

It was on the flying bridge one night, that I heard from the stocky, Chilean straits-pilot, of these strange people, the Alacalufs, or "canoe Indians." There are lots of fantastic legends of the Cape Stiff region, and so the story told me under the flame of the Southern Cross, of an ancient people who lived almost entirely in crude boats, eating only fish, mussels and sea-mammals until through the centuries their own bodies have become encased in a blubber-like layer of fat that sheds water like a duck and keeps out cold as well; whose legs have shriveled from disuse because they seldom leave their canoes, but whose shoulders and arms are extremely powerful—that story, too, sounded like romance.

The pilot doubted that we should find any Alacalufs. Six years ago the Chilean government had taken a rough census and found that there were then slightly less than a hundred still alive. The pilot himself had not seen any of them for four years, so he presumed they were extinct. Yet as we passed two lonely little islands, known as Adam and Eve, the canoes of the Alacalufs were waiting for us, fittingly enough, in Eden Bay.

"Canoe" is hardly the word for their crude craft. These are double-ended boats, suggestive of a Cape Cod dory in shape, and propelled by rough oars. Originally their boats were made of bark, like clumsy baskets, but since the turn of the century enough freighters have been wrecked in these waters to supply sufficient lumber to last for some time. The boats are about twenty-five feet in length, and filthy with lice "as big as cockroaches" as the captain phrased it. The bilges were filled with a mossy grass. There was a small fire burning on a mud floor, and a few brittle seal-hides to be used as covering when the rains came. For this country has the greatest rainfall in the world. As standard equipment they have crude spears for fishing and hunting, and a dog.

Those dogs are the only worthwhile gift civilization has given the Alacalufs. What they did about dogs in the past, I have been unable to ascertain. Neither Drake, Magellan, Captain Cook or Charles Darwin mention dogs in their meager writing of the Alacalufs. Perhaps they used the wild dogs of Patagonia. The mutts we saw were close kin to the friendly little alley mongrels of our cities, and strangely enough, when one considers the climate, they were short-haired. And, like all the mutts through time, they have formed a priceless partnership with man, earning their way. When a fish or a mammal is speared, it is the dog who leaps into the unbeliev-

ably frigid water and makes the kill.

In the first canoe was a hefty old woman wearing a sea captain's coat above the waist and a flap of seal-skin below it. The four tarnished stripes on the coat sleeves contrasted ludicrously with the stringy, brown breast hanging out the front. She had a surprisingly intelligent face. Her nose was a little flat, not much, and about her eyes I thought I detected a trace of the Mongol. It was an expressive face, a peasant face; I've seen a thousand thus in city slums and on farms in our own country. The skin was copper-toned and leathery from the weather. The hair black and stringy. It was a good face. It embraced the character and feeling of all women who have borne children, lived close to nature, and grubbed for a living.

Behind her sat a younger woman. Perhaps a ship with a bobbed-haired woman aboard had passed sometime before ours, for this young one wore her black hair chopped off in a Buster Brown bob. A funny little brown baby chewed bravely at her full, well-rounded breast. Her body was encased in a drab, Mother Hubbard sort of dress.

Up forward sat an old man with a straggly Van Dyke and a shaggy mane of black hair. He looked not unlike a Mexican peon. His eyes were wide and clear and very wise. He wore an old brown suit coat, which in its hey-dey had been rather natty. Below it he was stark naked.

A lithe young lad in his teens held the canoe against the accommodation ladder of our freighter. He wore a G-string and nothing else. Brown and sinewy and hairless. He had a nice face and a quick smile.

We gave them, criminally enough, the article that is eradicating them—clothing. Wasn't it almost zero in this, their summer? Weren't we nearly frozen out on deck? It seemed the perfect gift. The first mate donated a brand new Homburg hat; another threw down a pair of (God forgive her!) blue silk lounging pajamas. Wonderful gifts to the stone-age people!

Later, when I made an investigation into the tragic story of the Alacaluf, I found it was the white man's clothing that, in the main, was responsible for their extinction. Nature had supplied them, as mentioned before, with body oil to resist moisture, since it rains almost constantly down there. Clothing was worse than useless; the cloth never had a chance to dry and being continually soggy, the dampness which before had failed to penetrate, now went inward to the lungs. Thus tuberculosis, a favorite gift of the white man to other races, is closing the books on them.

WE ENCOUNTERED, in all, seven canoes containing approximately thirty natives. The boats were almost identical; the dog, the fire, the skins and the misfit cast-off clothing. From an old *Admiralty Sailing Pilot*, usually the most reliable reference book for seamen, I read that one of the peculiarities of the Alacalufs was the fact that they would not touch liquor. But when a bottle of Scotch whiskey was passed to them, one young woman hoisted the bottle and let it gurgle down her throat without batting an eye. The *Admiralty Pilot* also states that the men are dangerous *"if their women are molested"* but this hardly seems to warrant censure. In the four hundred years since the first white man visited this region, they've had good reason to be wary.

Charles Darwin, who first encountered the Alacalufs on his famous voyage of the *Beagle*, about 1831, was responsible for the report of their alleged cannibalism. He tells of them roasting their old women over fires and smoking the flesh to be eaten when other food was not available. This yarn so shocked the earnest young Englishman that he declared the Alacalufs to belong to the lowest group of humanity. Oft-times intolerant, Darwin belonged to a bigoted age, and he was not infallible in his conclusions. His accusation of cannibalism was so widely publicized that even today the statement can be found in official Admiralty sailing directions.

On the *Beagle*, during Darwin's voyage, was a young Alacaluf being returned from England to his native land. This young man lived in the fo'c'sle with the ordinary seamen, and could speak little

English. Darwin spent days on end questioning the native lad about the customs of his people. The seamen knew this, and the old bosun, after the eternal custom of bosuns, was an accomplished joker. So he and his cohorts coached the native on all sorts of wild yarns to relay to the serious young Darwin, who was then in his early twenties. Besides being a wit, the bosun was a writer of sorts himself, and he left the authentic source of this fable in his memoirs. And so the famous lie was born.

Just where the Alacalufs first came from, nobody seems to know. It is fairly well established that the land Indians of South America, like the North American Indian originally came over from Asia, via Alaska, and drifted south to distribute themselves over the two continents. Through the centuries they became conditioned by the geographical environs under which they lived. But if the Alacalufs belong to this same root, why should they choose the most inhospitable land on the globe when there was so much habitable territory on the way?

Time seems not to have changed them. They hunt with the same crude spears of the stone-age. They live in the same communal state as their ancestors, without tribe or chieftain. The family is the only political unit. To a good substantial Tory like Darwin, this was evidence of barbarianism, for he wrote:

It seems scarcely possible that their political state can be improved. At present, even a piece of cloth given to one is torn to shreds and distributed and no individual becomes richer than another.

It is difficult to understand how a chief can arise until there is property of some sort by which he might manifest his superiority and increase his power.

I said that civilization had not come to the Alacaluf, but there is one tragicomic incident of the Alacaluf coming to civilization. Europe had heard of the strange "canoe Indian" from Sir Francis Drake who first met them on his voyage in the *Pelican* in 1578. In Drake's own words he "*found people, both men and women, in their Canaos, (sic) naked and ranging from one island to another to seek their meat, who entered traffique with us . . .*" But Europe did not actually *see* these creatures until 1830 when Captain Fitzroy returned to England with four natives aboard the brig *Beagle*. And thereby hangs a tale. . . .

CAPTAIN ROBERT FITZroy of His Majesty's Royal Navy, was a good, God-fearing, Christian gentleman. When he visited the Patagonian Archi-

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BLACK MASK

pelago and Tierra del Fuego, the *Onas*, the *Haush* and the *Yahgan*, as well as the Alacalufs were still alive. All of these natives were lumped as "Fuegians." By that time the Fuegians, having made the acquaintance of white men, were getting light-fingered. So they stole one of His Majesty's shore boats. Captain Fitzroy couldn't get it back. In retaliation he captured four youngsters as hostages—three boys and a girl of eight. Apparently the Alacalufs thought it would be easier to produce four more babies than to steal another of His Majesty's boats, so Captain Fitzroy found himself with four lively youngsters on his hands. He took them back to England, arriving in 1830; the first and probably the only Alacalufs to leave their native habitat.

Our story concerns the girl, and the part one of the boys played in the mischief. Fitzroy named her Fuegia Basket, because the canoes of the Fuegians resembled crude baskets.

Little Fuegia Basket was a bright child, and she picked up the English language faster than her three companions. The gruff old captain came to adore her, and overflowing with paternal tenderness, decided to give her all the advantages of a Christian, English maiden. Savages were a rarity in pre-Victorian England and the arrival of the four young Fuegians was a national event. But the captain whisked little Fuegia Basket and one of her companions upcountry where they were installed in the home of a clergyman to be taught manners, modesty and morals.

Fuegia Basket charmed everyone she met. She became a celebrity; a sort of Shirley Temple of her day. Even the King and Queen wanted to see her, so Fitzroy and the loyal old bosun (whom he'd detailed as a sort of personal *aide de camp* to his charges) took her to London. Their hearts were bursting with pride.

Then came the evil day. Satan, or nature, if you prefer, was lurking around the corner. One day the old bosun chanced upon little Fuegia Basket and one of the young Fuegian bucks "in the bushes together," as he blushingly phrased it.

The bosun wasn't sure whether to kill the young man in traditional style and risk a national scandal, or to commit suicide for dereliction of his duty. He compromised by hurrying to Captain Fitzroy.

Fitzroy was broken-hearted. Fuegia Basket was public property! He felt in some way he had failed England. There was only one thing to do. At great expense the *Beagle* was recommissioned, and with the Fuegians and Charles Darwin and a missionary on board, the

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brave little brig started to race the stork on the long trek across the Atlantic to the bottom of the world.

The people of England were not told of the scandal; it was announced that the government had decided to send the Alacaluf children back to their native land to teach their peoples the advantages of civilization. The public contributed articles thought suitable for converting heathens and the *Beagle's* holds were bursting with gifts. An examination of the actual cargo lists show a preponderance of finger-bowls and bedchambers.

Somehow or another the stork got scared off. Maybe it was the finger-bowls and bed-chambers that turned the trick. In any event, Fuegia Basket landed in Tierra del Fuego as graceful and slender as ever. Nonetheless, on arrival she was promptly married to her partner in the Great Sin.

It was on that voyage that Darwin got much of his misinformation, thanks to the bosun, who by this time had recovered his sense of humor.

After the shotgun wedding, which took place on one of the islands, one missionary was left with the natives, and Fitzroy, broken-hearted and weary, returned to the *Beagle*. But not to sleep. All that night the skipper tossed and worried about little nine-year-old Fuegia, and the next morning he went ashore in the long boat to see how she had survived her nuptial night.

Fuegia Basket was in excellent fettle, but not so the lone missionary. Fitzroy found the other natives bouncing him around to see what made him tick. They never found out because that earnest young man was only too willing to scramble back aboard the *Beagle*. It's one thing to carry "the Word," quite another to get jounced around by a mob of husky heathen.

Darwin was in on all this mess, and he was disgusted with the Fuegians. Pompously he declared: "*The perfect equality among individuals . . . . must for a long time retard their civilization. As we see those animals, whose instincts compel them to live in society and obey a chief, are most capable of improvement, so it is with the races of mankind.*"

But much more important to our story is his observation that while sitting close around the fire that wedding night, he and the English sailors, although garbed in heavy clothing, were chilled to the bone while the native "savages," clustered quite a distance from the fires, were steaming with perspiration. This would tend to corroborate the recent theory of the blubber-like fat on their bodies that keeps out the cold.

The *Beagle* sailed away, and that was the last Captain Fitzroy heard of his little Fuegia Basket. But some ten years later, a sealer moored in the region reported that a Fuegian woman able to speak English came aboard his vessel and "solicited the men." So Fuegia Basket, the toast of England for one short year, learned at least two things from her contact with the white man; bigotry and prostitution.

THE *Onas* and the *Haush* and the *Yahgans* are gone now. They were too easy to get at. Only a few mixed-bloods are left. We even doubt the testimony of Drake and Sarmiento relating to the giant *Patagones*, who were eight feet tall and had feet like snowshoes.

For the sealers and the whalers and the missionaries followed close upon the heels of the explorers. Gin and holy talk were exchanged for health and skins; venereal disease for innocence. The unvarnished records are pretty ghastly. The Alacalufs escaped because of the four native groups, they were the most difficult to reach and pin down. Argentine soldiers wiped out hundreds in a clean-up drive; hundreds more were exterminated when they contracted diseases previously unknown to them from cast-off clothing sent to them. That just about cleaned the slate.

A handful of Alacalufs still survive in the same primitive state they were in when Caesar's Roman legions found the Britons throwing rocks at each other two thousand years ago. Perhaps, if you hurry, you will find, as we did, their weird canoes waiting in Eden not far from the Isle of the Mother of God.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

TWO new faces in the corner of the parade ground where the Writers' Brigade lines up for inspection twelve times each year. We've taken their dossiers according to *Camp-Fire* custom and had them transcribed to pass along to you before filing.

Fred Gipson has this to say about his story and himself—

"Sermon in Stones" grew out of my acquaintance with a Mexican sheepherder on a West Texas ranch. The man's accuracy with a rawhide sling, in which he hurled stones to guide or hold together his flock was amazing. He could kill small game, a wolf, bobcat or hawk with that primitive weapon at distances that would make a rifleman get down low in his sights. And if there was anything that old *pelado* loved, besides sheep, it was *pulque*, smuggled into his camp in some mysterious manner that he would never reveal to me.

For the last four years I have roved South and West Texas, gathering material and writing a thousand-word daily column for two Texas newspapers, besides reporting whatever run-of-the-mill news I encountered. When I began to break under the load, I got fired.

As a result, I've turned hopefully to fiction writing. Other than a few yarns published in outdoor magazines, this story will be the first ever to come out in a magazine of national circulation. The wife is already making plans to spend the money.

Born, 1908, of pioneer Texas folk; raised in the country; studied journalism in the University of Texas. Have been a farmer, cowhand, soda jerker, road-gang mule-skinner, tractor operator, bookkeeper and newspaper columnist. I have knocked around quite a bit, mostly in Texas, but nothing much ever came of it. I'm still hoping I'll encounter some real adventure before they tuck me under the sod. In the meantime, I'll read of them and try to write a few. I hope more of them will appear in *Adventure*.

That was no idle hope. There's another Gipson yarn in the inventory that'll be along shortly. It's about a couple of cowhands on a coon hunt through the Texas hills and brush and we hope you're going to get the same kick out of it that we did.

AND Hoffman Birney says—

I was a Second Lieutenant of Air Service in the World War—a "shabby deuce rather than an oak-leaf-clustered ace"—saw no combat service. Have maintained an academic interest in flying and its progress and now do my own in a Ford V-8. Most of my writing has been of the West. Hobbies are books and bulldogs. Principal interest in life—my son. Have traveled in South America where I picked up a bit of Spanish and a knowledge of unusual Spanish drinks.

There's authority for the sinking of the steamer in the harbor of Alacran. In 1867 the steamer *Rhone* sank, with the loss of hundreds of lives, while attempting to escape from the harbor of one of the British Virgins and gain the open sea during a tropical hurricane.

Not what you'd call a verbose guy, is he? Those "unusual Spanish drinks" must have a sort of reverse English effect. They certainly don't beget garrulousness. Well, if he'll just write us a yarn once in a while as good as "Obsolete Equipment" we won't insist he sound off at any greater length about himself.

GEORGES SURDEZ' supplementary material on the background of his stories we usually find as interesting as the yarns themselves and his notations about "They *Can* Be Licked!" is no exception. We were glad to see the following tribute to the valor of loyal Norwegian troops by a man who knows

his current military history as thoroughly as it is possible to know it these confused times.

The Foreign Legion in Norway performed according to its standards, carrying through the task assigned to its battalions, retreating only when ordered. But I state somewhere that the Norwegian troops were driven back by the Germans for a time, during the hard battle for Narvik. That appears to be an established fact. In an article authorized by the Norwegian Government, a Norwegian author writes: ". . . the main battle was over about 12 noon Monday the 27th (of May 1940); it had lasted twelve hours. In the mountains east of the town, where the Norwegians fought, the battle lasted another couple of hours."

And in the official record of orders issued by the Direction of Operations for the attack on Narvik, there is this note, time noted as 7:10 a. m.: "The Norwegian battalion has given up the ravine between Orneset ridge and the slopes of Hill 457," which leads to the following order to the Legion: ". . . the objective will be to recapture Hill 457 and establish the Norwegian battalion on it so that it can continue its advance."

I was writing a story about the Foreign Legion, and the incident was part of the whole. The information available even now does not name the units of the Legion that clung to Hill 457, but it is easy to know that some did, for there were some losses on H-457 from Allied artillery fire, between 6 and 8 a. m. In the story, I explained the Norwegians' withdrawal, and their return. But I found no place to make it clear that I knew that the Norwegians were not in the habit of yielding before the Nazis.

The more you study that campaign, the more admiration you feel for the Norwegians. Evidently, the breed has not degenerated, for they fought with Viking fury and with Viking skill. There were Quislings and Sundlos, of course, but the proportion of Fifth Columnists, traitors and spies (three names for the same thing), must have been mighty small in Norway.

Here was a country with a population scarcely larger than that of Minnesota, scattered over a territory about one-third larger than that state, sprawling along the sea for a distance that I judge to be about like that between Maine and South Carolina—a nation not organized for war, protected by treaties, defended by a citizens' army. It was subjected to a surprise attack by picked forces selected from the fighting élite of more than eighty-five million people. The Norwegians accepted the fight—they fought alone for from one week to four weeks, depending on the sectors, before the British and French landed troops, and many of them fought alone *after* the Allies had left—fought without aviation, with obsolete equipment, with men who had had short training-periods.

The nature of their country alone cannot be the explanation of that superb resistance. British and French forces at Namsos, at Andalsnes, elsewhere, were fiercely battered, smashed, forced to race for their transports. The Norwegian Army had fought to keep landing points for the Allies, and it fought to give them time to embark again. Norwegians were fighting and dying at the start of the campaign, Norwegians were fighting and dying at the end. Late in May, they were fighting close to Oslo, they were fighting in the Oster Valley, they were fighting at Narvik. They yielded only when their ammunition gave out and all hope of obtaining replenishment was utterly gone.

Their courage and endurance surprised no one: They were expected of Norwegians. But what is amazing is their efficiency within chaos, what they accomplished with the poor means at their disposal. Their officers must be a wonderful lot, for even when the larger forces were split by the invaders, the small units carried on independently, with stubborn intelligence. That shows that everywhere there were leaders who had not merely guts and patriotism, but professional pride and efficiency, men who could hold together, with but short training, against the crack units of the Nazi troopers.

They wrote modern sagas of land and sea. Outside Trondheim, Hegra Fortress held out for a month; when you remember the fate of Belgian and French forts, when you discover that Hegra was an old fortification, partly dismantled, what can you say? A few miles from Stavanger, thirteen hundred Norwegian soldiers, many of them reservists, fought two weeks, to the last cartridge, and killed more than their own numbers of invaders.

North of Narvik, after that city had fallen into Nazi hands through treason,

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a small detachment of cadets stopped the Germans cold at Gratangen, gave time for General Fleischer's battalions, who had been on Finnish Border duty, to arrive. Here the Germans not only enjoyed the tremendous advantage of an aggressive, numerous aviation, of superior fighting tools on land, but they were numerically stronger. The Norwegians licked them, took Gratangen a first time, were forced out, hung on, and with the help of the first Allied soldiers to land, took Gratangen again. They had fought on their own, Norwegians against Nazis, for about *three weeks!*

Norway kept up a small navy, and the nation did not waste its money. Despite surprise, odds, aviation, the Norwegian Navy fought. It died, too, but took along destroyers, cruisers and one battleship of Germany. In Narvik Fjord, the coastal battleship *Eidsvold,* all of four thousand tons, was torpedoed while her captain was engaged in conversation with a Nazi emissary. But her sister-ship, the *Norge,* got warning. Her crew tumbled out of the bunks to man the guns, and she fought, in the darkness, through blinding snow, against ships she could not quite identify, and which knew her exact position. She sank herself a destroyer, battered another so that it had to be beached, raised hell in general until she turned turtle after two torpedoes struck her. One hundred and twenty men went down in her.

A thousand combats, thousands of heroes. The real story of the campaign is not one of the Foreign Legion, it is that of Norway's men.

For the Legion, Norway was an episode. Nevertheless, the taking of Narvik remains the only land victory of the Allies on an important objective, and the Legion had the lion's share. But even in the disastrous campaign of France, the Legion lived up to traditions. The 22nd Regiment of Foreign Volunteers was thrown into the path of the German motorized divisions in Northern France, with orders to hold. That regiment is not listed among the captured units and it did not retreat. It had to be annihilated where it held—it vanished from the rolls!

In brief accounts of military operations that have been published up to now, one finds frequent mention: "Such and such a village was retaken for so many hours, tanks destroyed, by such and such a unit *preceded by volunteer grenadiers of the Foreign Legion.*"

(Continued on page 116)

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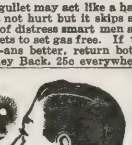

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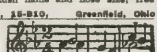

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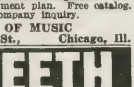

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(Continued from page 114)

We were saddened to hear, just too late to include in last month's *Camp-Fire*, news of the death on May 30 of Philip H. Glover, our *Ask Adventure* expert on shotguns and wing shooting.

Born in Portland Feb. 23, 1883, the son of Captain Russell and Elizabeth Nash Glover, he was graduated in 1906 with a B. S. degree from the University of Maine, where he returned for his master's degree in 1913.

After working with the United States Reclamation service, with the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad as computer and assistant engineer, with the International Paper company in Santo Domingo, and as resident bridge engineer with the State Highway commission in the Bangor district, he was assistant city engineer in Bangor for 10 months before taking over duties as chief engineer in December, 1932. He resigned his Bangor position early in April.

He is survived by his wife, the former Zena Talmadge of Athens, Ga., a brother, Russell, and a stepson, Thomas Nickerson, navy pilot on Alaskan duty.

Mr. Glover had been on the staff of *Adventure* only since February and we had hardly had time to get acquainted with him, but in those few short months he had already proved himself an invaluable addition to our roll of authorities and we shall miss his lucid and informative answers to queries in his field.

ADD notes on Florida wolves. It's enough to drive a man to lycanthropy!

Sirs:—Re Wolves, page 109, August *Adventure*, will say that there are hundreds of pioneer Floridians who have seen, hunted and killed wolves in Florida. In fact, years ago there was a bounty of $10.00 per pelt on wolves. About the

(Continued on page 123)

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Am a young man, 28 years of age; high school, 1 year of business college. If things are at all favorable, hope to remain there permanently. Am an American citizen. Can easily arrange for passage, though it will be several months before I can conveniently leave. Have come to the choice of either South or Central America, whichever has the most favorable conditions, though from what little I have learned, think South America most logical choice.

If there are any extra pointers you could give me will surely appreciate same. Thanking you once again,

—Robert Sourisseau
306 N. Broadway,
R. C. No. 2,
Los Angeles, Cal.

Reply by Paul Vanorden Shaw:—I do not advise any young man to come to South America at the present time for the purpose of making his career here and here are the reasons.

First, the salaries and wages paid down here are extremely low and few Americans would be able to live on them. You would have to change your standard of living altogether. Second, even to get a job would not be easy. You would have to have a good working

(Continued on page 120)

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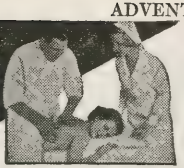

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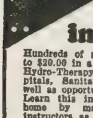

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(Continued from page 118)

knowledge of Spanish for all countries except Brazil where Portuguese is spoken. You would be competing with bright young "natives" who know the language and all the customs and psychology of the countries in which they live. American firms nowadays bring down on contract only the heads of companies or experts in various lines who have been with these companies in the United States and have shown special aptitude for doing the same work abroad. Third, there is the two-thirds law which requires that two-thirds of the employes be nationals of the country where the company branch is located. This often makes it impossible to hire foreigners. Fourth, there are already so many foreigners in Brazil, Europeans who have made these South American countries their homes, that you would be competing with them, also.

Fifth, there is great difficulty in the matter of getting a visa to come to these countries unless you get a tourist visa and when you have only this it is practically impossible to get it extended in order to stay. It is true that there are more opportunities for the capitalist who has great experience and ability but the foreign capitalist is also finding it increasingly difficult and of course it always takes him years to build up his business. If you came you would have to have money enough to pay your passage home. You would, in fact, probably be required to buy a round-trip ticket. And fifty dollars would not last a month down here.

So that it seems to me to be very unwise for you to come at this time. Perhaps in the future after the war is over things will be very different and there will be a real opportunity for an American to come down here and seek his fortune.

HORSES from the ground up.

Request:—I sincerely hope you can help me. I am eighteen years old and some day I intend to raise horses. I read as many books as I can about horses and recently I joined the American Horse Show Ass'n, but I find this is not enough. What I want to do is to get in on the ground floor. I want to actually take care of horses because I believe this is the best way to learn. I haven't any experience in taking care of them but I would like to get a job

any place so long as I can be with them. Could you tell me how to go about this, since I haven't anyone to ask who knows about horses or is interested in them. Where should I go if I want to get a job in this field? I would appreciate any information that you think I would need.

—Paul B. Schuster,
280 St. John's Place,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Reply by Fairfax Downey:—I can think of no better way for you to learn the care of horses and horsemanship than the following: You are 18, old enough, with your parents' consent, to enlist in the U. S. Army. Join the Cavalry, the horse-drawn Field Artillery, or the Remount Service. By the end of your term of enlistment you will, if you have applied yourself (and the Army, if I remember it, will see that you do) have learned the care of horses literally from the ground up.

SOUTH of the border.

Request:—I have a chest condition which my doctor advises would be benefited by a warm, dry climate in an altitude preferably not higher than 3000 feet, and I should be very glad if you would tell me where I might find a suitable location in Mexico and what conditions I might expect there.

I would prefer a district where the cost of living is not high so it might be best to be away from popular tourist routes.

Would it be much warmer at 3000 or less than in the higher altitudes?

How many pesos to the U. S. dollar now?

I would like to rent a small house with water installed or without this convenience if it should not be readily available. How much might rent cost? What might wages be for a housekeeper who could cook?

How would food costs compare with those in the U. S.?

Would nights be cool and would there be a season of any considerable rainfall?

I would want to live simply as my means are not great and any information or suggestions you may give will be gladly received and appreciated by me.

—John R. Murray,
Queen Alexandra Sanatorium,
London,
Ontario, Canada.

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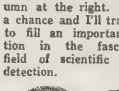

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5.25-17	2.45	1.15
28x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
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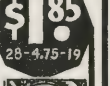

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Reply by J. W. Whiteaker:—There are many sections of Mexico that would be ideal for your physical condition, but you could not go to all of them to check up on their desirability. I would select Monterey if I wanted to live in a city not too far away from the United States. The climatic conditions are very good—not too hot in summer nor too cold in winter. The rainy season is from June to October—rains a few minutes per day and then clears off—leaves the air cool and fresh.

In higher altitudes there is a touch of frost even during the hottest days in the lowlands, so to be more comfortable a happy medium of about 1500 to 2000 feet above sea level would be about right.

A U. S. dollar is worth about $4.90 in Mexican money at the present time—the exchange rate changes sometimes weekly.

In the American quarters of Monterey there are usually a few desirable houses of from three to five rooms for rent at a reasonable rent of from $2 to $3 per room per month. These are unfurnished—furnished houses or apartments are slightly higher.

The wage for a housekeeper is not very much, for Mexican women are employed by most of the American homes as housekeepers at about $1.50 per week.

The comparison between the cost of food in the U. S. and that in Mexico is about equal with the exception of some of the native grown food stuff in the Mexican part of the city which is cheaper and not so carefully handled.

The days are warm and the nights are cool. Even in the summertime a blanket is not too much cover.

A tourist card is all that you will need to enter Mexico from the Texas side. The card is to be used for pleasure only and not for business purposes. A passport is required if you intend to do any kind of business. A card will cost about $2.00 Mexican, a passport $20.00 American.

A DOG'S failing eyesight.

Request:—I have a wonderful pointer but because of old age his eyes are failing. I have heard it is possible to put glasses on dogs. If so I'd appreciate it if you'd tell me about it.

—A. J. Gates,
9 Lincoln St.,
Westbow, Mass.

Reply by Freeman Lloyd:—I am afraid the case of your old, but still wonderful, pointer dog whose eyes have become dim or are failing is a hopeless one. The seeing powers of dogs become less and less as they grow older. In all my years of experience I have never heard of the practical use of spectacles on a dog. In the first place, in what manner could an optician test a dog's eyes, that he might find out which glasses best suited that dog's vision?

The sight of the eyes may be improved if the following treatment is given: bathe eyes three or four times daily with warm boracic solution (a teaspoonful to a pint of water). After this, apply a few drops of the following lotion: zinc sulphite, 2 grains; boracic acid, 10 grains; water, 1 ounce. Keep the dog's bowels open.

THE CAMP-FIRE

(Continued from page 116)

time of the Dade Massacre, the woods were full of wolves and they remained in this state for fifty to sixty years later.

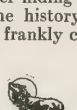
Gordon MacCreagh is correct as to wolves in this state now. Bounties and the encroachment of civilization, have exterminated the varmints and there are now probably no wolves left in the entire state unless a bare remnant somewhere in the wilds not visited by men.

Just wanted to say that hundreds of natives have heard the wolves many nights and have hunted and killed them too, but that was years ago.

Good luck and happy hunting.

—Jerald W. Farr.

And on double-barreled cannon. Remember "Single Combat," F. R. Buckley's Caradosso story in the September issue and his Camp-Fire note thereon? Norman D. Nickerson of Athens, Ga., sends the author a picture postcard of the "only double-barreled cannon in existence today" which graces a plot of greenery in his home town. Anyone know of another hiding somewhere? Or anything of the history of the one in Athens? We're frankly curious.—K.S.W.



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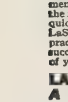

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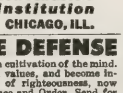

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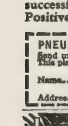

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On sale October 10th

(Continued from page 67)

baum, which is the pres of the leeg, wired us to send him a detailed report of the game. I wired him like this. Game is over. Smoke Tree won and I lost my bridge work and my shirt. He wired back, this is your release, because we do not allow umpires to bet on the game.

Well, Bill, you can see now how necessary it is for I and Chesty to land in a better leeg.

There is a frate train through here at midnight so please write I and Chesty care of the Golden Goose truk Co, Fresno, California.

Yrs respy.
Mortimer Lefty Simpson and
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P.S. The sheriff just came and said we could have the chazzie of our car, because it ain't worth the attachment. Bill, I believe we can see the silver lining again. We will go back and explain to Mr. Greenbaum, and we may still be two little boys in blew.

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Here's How to Relieve It

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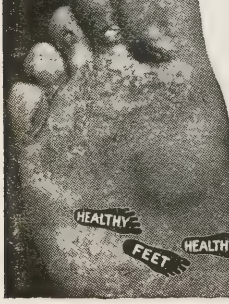
Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form and the skin cracks and peels. After awhile the itching becomes intense and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.



DON'T PAY TILL RELIEVED

Beware of It Spreading

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

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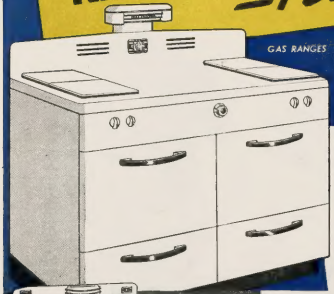

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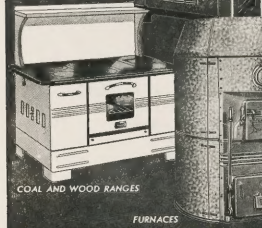

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